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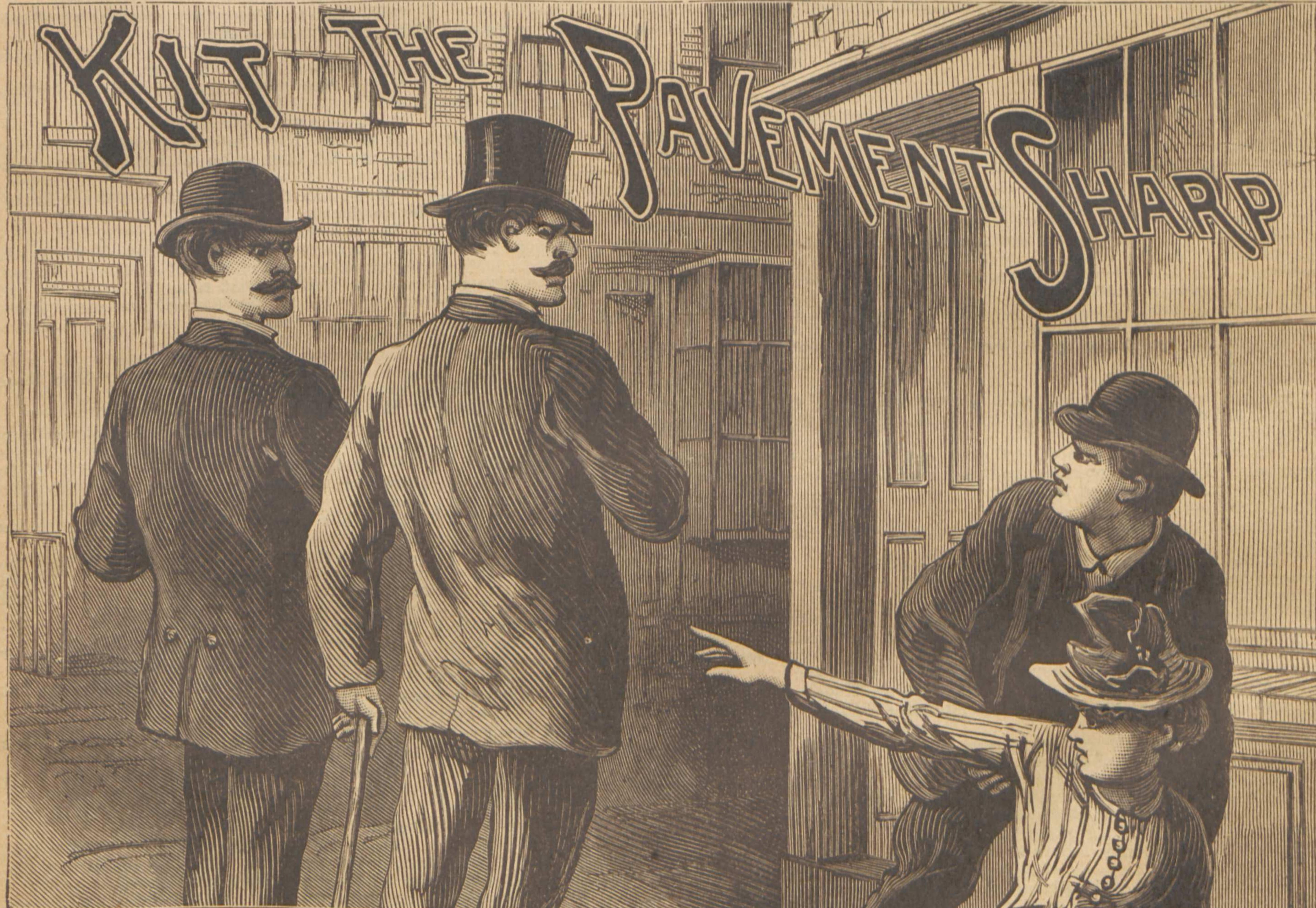
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OR,
Rustling the Prince of Rogues.

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AUTHOR OF "BUCKSKIN DETECTIVE," "PHIL FLASH," "BOY SHADOW," "DODGER DICK NOVELS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS VISIT.

NEARLY everybody for squares around his den in the basement knew Old Penrod the cobbler, fortune-teller, charm-doctor, and what not.

He was very old, judging from his personal appearance, which was decidedly against him in more ways than one. His form was bent and ill-shaped; his face had the hue of very old parchment; but his eyes, small and deeply set,

"SAVE ME FROM THE TOILS OF THE INFAMOUS LEAGUE WHOSE CHIEF IS PRINCE OWLET!" THE POOR GIRL GASPED.

Kit, the Pavement Sharp.

burned with a fire which, by rights, should have gone out years before.

The "Wizard Cobbler," as the old man was often called, had many visitors besides those who brought work to his hammer. He had a certain room to which he took such customers, and the world at large was not permitted to see what took place beyond its threshold.

The lights of New York were flashing in every direction one night, when a man, who did not appear at home in the clothes he wore, tripped down the steps leading to the cobbler's den, and disappeared beyond its door.

Old Penrod's eyes got a sudden glitter the moment he saw his caller.

He was in the act of pegging a shoe, but the uplifted hammer fell without delivering the blow intended, and he seemed to study his caller with a curious smile.

"Don't you think I look myself in these feathers?" laughed the visitor, as he glanced at his garb.

"I don't think you do, quite," answered Penrod. "But it's none o' my business, you know."

By this time the man had taken possession of a backless chair which stood near the old man's work-bench.

He was about forty. His figure was well-shaped, and, aside from the clothes he wore, which were rather uncouth and undoubtedly a disguise, he was somewhat of a gentleman; that is, he would look so in other clothes, at least.

"Have you got anything for me?" demanded the caller.

"Not much," was the reply.

"A little, then?"

"Yes."

"That is better than nothing."

Old Penrod rose and locked the door by slipping a bolt; then he led his visitor to a room back of his bench.

All this time the black eyes of the night visitor were fixed upon the Wizard. They followed his every movement, and when they saw the old man cross the room and unlock an old-fashioned iron safe seemingly imbedded in the wall, they appear to glitter.

At length Penrod came back to his visitor with a flat package in his hand.

"It isn't much, and perhaps it won't do you much good," said he.

The other put out his hand.

"Let me see it," he replied, with eagerness. "I can't tell until I've done that, you know."

The cobbler hesitated.

"You want your money first, eh?" exclaimed the man. "I can be independent in this matter if I choose to. I don't need to pay for information before I get it."

Old Penrod thrust the package into the caller's hands.

"I'd like to know who said anything about money," he exclaimed. "There! you have what I have picked up. It may be valuable to you, and if you pay liberally for it, other prizes may follow."

The man with the dark eyes opened the parcel and glanced over its contents. These consisted of several documents covered with writing, and all seemed to possess a certain interest to the examiner.

"Where did you get these?" he queried.

"That is my business," grinned Old Penrod. "What are they worth?"

"Not a great deal," responded the man, carelessly, but at once took some bills from his waist-coat and handed them to Penrod, who counted them over and found fifty dollars in his hand.

He looked disappointed.

"No more?" with a swift glance at the visitor.

"Great Caesar! do you want to rob me?"

"No, but I want fair pay."

For half a second the two men looked strangely at one another with the sickly light of the cobbler's lamp on their faces.

"Fair pay, eh?" ejaculated the stranger. "I think you've got it. You don't know what these papers are worth to me."

"No; but I know the risks I ran in getting them."

"Risks?"

The man appeared to repeat the word with an incredulous smile.

"I said risks!" exclaimed Old Penrod, with emphasis. "If you think you can do as well, or better, you're welcome to try. I'm sure I don't covet the job," and, leaning forward and lowering his voice, he added: "I don't want to look through iron diamonds in my old age. Yes, I say, if you think you can do as well, you're welcome to try."

"I didn't mean to underrate your services," was the answer. "I merely meant that these

papers are not worth as much to me as others might be."

"I understand. The rest will come in time. I'm on the right track."

"When can you have them?"

"I can't say."

"By to-morrow night?"

"I will try."

"Who is helping you?"

Old Penrod drew back like a snail into his shell.

"Can't I have a secret or two?" he queried, with a grin.

"Yes, a dozen if you want them! But, I'll keep what I've got," and the speaker hid the documents in his bosom.

Then he took two more bills from his pocket, and added them to the sum he had already given the old man, and, buttoning his coat to the chin, he was again at the door of the cobbler's den.

"I'll come back to-morrow night," said he; "do your best. I want the missing links. There's a cool thousand in it for you, Philip."

"And a million for the Prince of Gotham—eh?" laughed the cobbler.

"That is none of your business," was the prompt retort of the Prince. "Stand by me and you'll not have to cobble any more. Good-night, now. Remember! I want the other papers," and the visitor vanished.

"The coolest rascal in New York!" exclaimed he. "A thousand for me, but a million for him! Oh, I know you, Oliver Owlet! You are the Prince of Gotham to some, but to me you are the Prince of Scamps. I wonder what the boy thinks, now?"

Penrod had hardly spoken thus to himself when the door flew open, and an agile boy of seventeen appeared with eagerness in his eyes.

"Where is he?" exclaimed the lad.

"Just gone; but, don't be in a hurry. I want to know what you think."

"Not now, Pop Phil!" was the response. "I don't want to lose sight of him."

"But you can stop long enough to give an opinion, and then catch him."

"No, I say; not now," and, springing away the boy vanished.

The cobbler went back to his bench and took up his unfinished job.

"I've set a young ferret after you, Mr. Owlet," he chuckled between strokes, and Keen Kit won't lose sight of you for a moment, Oliver. Kit and I will make more than a thousand out of this game. You're right, Oliver, I won't need to cobble much longer!"

Meanwhile, out among the lights and shadows of the streets, Keen Kit was following this Owlet—the boy ferret in pursuit of a villain.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLY IN THE WEB.

MR. OWLET glided along with considerable youthfulness in his step. Every now and then he chuckled over something that seemed to do him good.

Had he caught sight of the alert boy upon his trail, he might have changed both his course and his gait; but, he was oblivious to the espionage, and kept on, unsuspecting that he was followed.

At last Kit could follow him no longer, for the Prince disappeared beyond the door of an old-fashioned house.

The boy stopped and looked at the structure.

"You needn't tell me that you live there, Prince Oliver!" laughed Kit, "your feathers are too fine for such a nest. But, you have a motive for entering the old house, and I'd like to know what it is."

The Pavement Sharp concluded to wait a few minutes for Owlet's reappearance. He scarcely dared hope for that, but at the end of ten minutes, to his joy, the door opened, and a man, who did not much resemble the Prince at first sight, came out.

"A change of costume, I see!" exclaimed Kit who at once 'tumbled to' the metamorphosis. "Prince Oliver is himself once more. He had an eye for business when he came to Pop Philip in the slouchy garb. Now, he will fry his other fish, and I'm right on hand when there is a fry on the menu!"

Oliver Owlet turned the first corner, and just beyond it he nearly ran up against a man who was apparently waiting for some one.

This individual was more youthful looking than the Prince. He was almost dudishly attired, and when the two had recognized each other with a smile, they walked off together.

"What did you do?" asked the younger, with in hearing of the sharp-eared boy who risked a

good deal in getting close enough to catch their words.

"Not very much, Leon, but secured another link," was the response.

"Did the old fellow want to sell high?"

"Yes, I paid him a good price, too."

"Not enough to bankrupt us, though?"

"Of course not!"

All this time a young girl was eying these two with a good deal of suspicion.

She was barely past seventeen, and she wore the clothes of a working girl. In features she was strikingly handsome; her figure was grace itself, and about her, in an indescribable way, there lurked a look of sadness and deep anxiety.

Keen Kit accidentally caught sight of this young woman, and it did not take him long to see that she was watching the two men who were interesting him at that moment.

He had never seen the girl before, though of late he had thought that the mysterious scheme which Owlet was playing was against some innocent or helpless person, most likely one of the gentle sex.

All at once the Prince and his companion entered a cigar store. The girl drew close, as if fearful of losing sight of the precious pair, and in doing so she passed the boy.

Their eyes met.

"Don't go too close; they may see you," said Kit, touching her arm.

"What do you know?" exclaimed the girl, changing color in the lamplight.

"More than you think," replied the boy at a venture.

"Who are you?"

It was not Kit's intention to betray his mission, nor his connection with the Wizard Cobbler.

"Don't I look just what I am—a street Arab?" he laughed.

He got a closer look for his answer.

"You may be that, but, I don't think you are like the most of them," was the response, spoken in most earnest tones, and then the girl sent a swift glance toward the cigar store.

"You will not tell me that you were not watching those two men?"

Kit thought he saw his opportunity.

"I will not," was his reply. "You were watching them also?"

"I was!"

The girl recoiled with an exclamation of surprise on her lips, for at that moment Prince Owlet and his companion had emerged from the shop and were looking straight at the two shadowers.

Keen Kit felt the hot blood mount to his temples.

He saw the deep-set eyes of Owlet, and the bright, covetous ones of his comrade, as all regarded the girl with intense interest and power.

Suddenly Owlet stepped forward.

"See here, child! I've got some news for you," said he, still looking at the girl.

"For me?" asked the girl though she did not move.

"Yes, for you."

"You don't want to tell her in that gamin's presence!" broke in Leon, scowling at the boy.

"Gamin, am I?" cried Kit, measuring Leon from head to foot in a contemptuous manner.

"That's what I said. I guess I speak fair English."

And as he spoke he raised the light rattan cane he carried, but the movement did not disconcert the young Pavement Sharp.

Before she could restrain her new acquaintance, the girl saw him bound forward, and in a twinkling Leon's cane was jerked from his grip and thrown half-way across the street.

"Did you ever see such impudence, Oliver?" exclaimed Leon with a glance at his companion.

"I don't like to soil my hands with a street rat; but—"

"Don't fool with him!" interrupted the Prince. "Floy is going with us, and we won't have any scene with the gutter-snipe."

At the same time Owlet, who was near enough, seized the girl's arm, but she jerked backward with an emphasis that broke his grip, and successfully eluded his effort to take her, while Kit, whose ire was now fully aroused, was ready for an encounter with Leon; but the young man decided not to push the sudden introduction, and, walking into the street, he recovered his cane, to the taunting laugh of several persons who had witnessed the scene.

"Come, Floy!" resumed Owlet. "You want to hear the news I've got. I know you do."

"No!" was the firm answer. "I've heard enough already. Tell me where my brother is—

tell me, in the presence of this boy—and I will listen. Otherwise, I will hear nothing from you."

Keen Kit noticed that both men colored deeply when Floy mentioned her brother. Owlet was the first to recover.

"What do we know about your brother?" he asked.

"More than you want to tell!"

"Pish! The same old story!" laughed the Prince. "You don't want to bother us, girl."

"Do you hear that?" cried Floy, turning upon Kit. "They don't want me to bother them! Do you know that man?" pointing to Owlet. "He is the celebrated Prince of Gotham, and the other is Leon Layne—a fit companion for the American Prince!" I know them. If there is a scheme too dark for them, I'd like to know what it is. If there is a trick too base for them to play, I'd like to hear of it!"

Owlet thought to break the force of the girl's words by a boisterous laugh.

"Come along! We can't waste time with such people," urged Leon, putting his arm through Owlet's. "We've got other fish to fry," and he proceeded to drag the hesitating Prince away by main force.

"One moment! By heavens! I will place a bug in her ear before we go!" cried Owlet, and, breaking from his companion's grasp he stepped to Floy's side and literally hissed in her ear these terrible words:

"A silent tongue means life to you! a noisy one, a terrible death! Whether near or far, girl, you are in the grip of an octopus that can strangle you at any moment!"

He almost threw the white-faced creature from him as he uttered the last word, and Kit, who thought she was falling, caught her in his arms.

At the same time he received from Owlet a look he was destined to recall at no distant day; and when the Prince turned toward his companion, he felt Floy sink to the sidewalk.

"For Heaven's sake save me from the toils of the infamous League whose chief is Prince Owlet!" the poor girl gasped.

CHAPTER III.

KIT AND FLOY.

HALF an hour after the events just recorded, Keen Kit, the Pavement Sharp, found himself listening to a strange and interesting story from Floy's lips.

The girl had recovered sufficiently to go home, and her new-found acquaintance had accompanied her to learn more about her and her connection with Oliver Owlet.

Floy Fassett, such was her name, occupied a small room on the second floor of a very plain looking house in a quiet neighborhood, though not far from the river.

She had already told Kit that she lived alone, but not until he had crossed the threshold and found himself in the humble apartment, was he given an inkling of the truth.

"I came to New York nearly six months ago on an exciting mission," explained Floy. "I am in search of my brother, who was decoyed from home some weeks before my arrival. We were happy in our little home on the Passaic. Father, dying, left us a few acres, but in the strong box which he kept under his bed, securely locked, we discovered something that changed the channels of our lives.

"It seems that we are heirs to an estate which was left to particular persons some years ago. It is to the advantage of certain people to get us out of the way. My brother, Paul, one day received a letter from New York, asking him if he would like a nice, easy place with a good salary attached. He always had a yearning for city life, and the letter seemed to transform him into another creature. He answered, against my wishes, saying that he would like to come. By this time it was known that we had found the papers in father's box. Paul thought he could bring them to the city and get some lawyer to help him to the legacy which undoubtedly belongs to us. He mentioned the matter to his city correspondent, who told him by all means to fetch the documents with him, as he knew a lawyer who would undertake the case for nothing.

"I begged him not to go, but the letters of the man seemed to infatuate him, and one day he went away with the fatal treasure in his valise. Since then I have not seen my brother. I wrote him a dozen times to the address given by his correspondent, but silence and nothing more has been the result. Almost distracted, I finally came on myself. I have been here ever since, searching everywhere for Paul. He has disappeared as effectually as though the earth had swallowed him."

"But, you asked Owlet to tell you where he is," suggested Kit, inquiringly.

"So I did," was the response. "If any man knows, that rascal does. I have made several discoveries which, when put together, tell me that he was the correspondent I have mentioned—in other words, that he lured Paul to this city. I was not here three days before his eyes were upon me. He seemed to know that I was coming. The Prince of Gotham, as he is called, is at the head of a League organized for deep, dark purposes. I cannot tell you how far it extends. I am afraid that the papers Paul carried with him, with my brother himself, have fallen into the hands of the conspirators."

"Not all of them, I think," remarked Kit, recalling the interview he had witnessed in the Wizard Cobbler's back room.

"What do you mean? Do you know anything about the documents?"

The boy smiled in a manner that only whetted Floy's curiosity.

"I cannot tell you just now what I know," replied he. "But tell me all you know about Prince Owlet."

"It is not much. I have dogged him time and again during the past six months. I have traced him through the city in various disguises. He has laughed at my story about Paul; but I have persisted. To-night was not the first time he threatened me; but he never used such terrible words before. His companion, Leon Layne, is little better than his master. I dare not think what may have become of Paul. New York is full of death-traps and dark places. I shudder when I think of them. But I intend to fight the scoundrels to the end. I have but one desire in life, and that is to find my brother. I care nothing for the legacy. I would surrender all claim to it for knowledge of his safety. Oliver Owlet told me that a still tongue meant life—a noisy one, death! I defy him. I shall speak. I have spoken to you. I don't care what follows. The spiders of New York cannot more than suck the blood of Floy Fassett!"

All this was more than enough to interest Kit in the story of the determined girl who stood before him.

"But you have not told me who you are," suddenly said Floy.

"I am Kit Kent."

"Leon Layne called you a gamin."

"He wasn't far wrong," smiled the boy. "I live on the pavement."

Floy appeared to draw back and look at him.

"You don't look like the rest of them!" she exclaimed.

"Perhaps not. I am a little better clad."

"Ah! you do something for a living, then?"

"I sometimes run a trail."

"For the police?"

"No, for a person who pays me better."

Floy looked very inquisitive, but made no reply.

"I am going to help you," Kit went on.

"What! help me to find Paul?"

"Yes."

"A thousand thanks! But, no! I cannot ask you to incur the hatred of Prince Owlet and his friends. They have already spotted you."

"What if they have?" exclaimed Keen Kit. "I've dealt with rascals before this. I know something about their ways. The person I sometimes serve has a great deal to do with scamps of every description."

"I would like to ask—"

"Something about my employer, eh?" interrupted Kit. "I don't think you've ever heard of him. They call him the Wizard Cobbler."

A strange exclamation parted the girl's lips.

"I know him! He once did a little work for me," and Floy pointed to a patch on one of her shoes. "I guess everybody knows Old Penrod, the cobbler. So you serve him?"

"Sometimes."

"Do you lodge there?"

"Quite often when I am not engaged."

"Then, I will know where to look for you."

"For Heaven's sake don't come about the basement den looking for me!" cried the Pavement Sharp. "I don't want the Wizard Cobbler to discover that I know you."

"Because he knows Prince Owlet? Is that why?"

"Yes."

"I happen to know that the cobbler and the rascal are acquainted, for I once tracked the latter to the den. Oh, as you see, I have been the Prince's shadow a long time!"

"Now," said Kit, putting on his hat, after a few more words, "I am going to see what I can do."

"You mean that you are going to find Paul, don't you?"

"I hope so."

"I wish you success, but I fear the worst; I can't help it."

"I appreciate the situation," answered Kit, putting on a cheerful countenance. "I'm not one of those who look on the dark side of things when one can see the brighter side by turning one's head a little. Prince Owlet is one of the greatest scamps out of prison. He is always spinning a web of some sort, and, from appearances, he seldom fails to catch a golden fly. I've seen enough of him, off and on, to get a pretty good estimate of his character. Dangerous? Of course he is. He wouldn't hesitate a second to strangle an enemy on sight. But I'm ready for him. I want to know what has become of Paul Fassett."

"And you will tell me the truth?" asked Floy.

"I will keep nothing back."

"Thank Heaven!"

Keen Kit took the hand which was put out for the purpose of bidding him good-by. He held it for a moment, gazing into the deep eyes of the Jersey girl, then he dropped it suddenly, and rushed impulsively from the room.

He felt that he had championed a just but dangerous cause, and was confirmed in this belief when, a moment later, at the foot of the stairs, and in the dim hall, he almost ran against a crouching figure.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTHER MAGNUS.

THE boy sharp did not stop to inquire into the identity of the person in the hall, but kept on, and disappeared soon after reaching the sidewalk.

He was deeply interested in the new acquaintance he had made, and was anxious to carry out with the greatest possible speed, a plan he had already formed.

The reader will recollect that he confessed to Floy that he was, to a certain degree, in the employ of the Wizard Cobbler.

This was true.

Some time previous to the date of our story, Old Penrod had run across the boy, and, seeing his natural shrewdness, had given him food and shelter, with a view of utilizing him in any manner that promised to be advantageous to his own designs.

In more ways than one Kit had already assisted the cobbler, but, at the same time, he had informed himself as to the old rascal's schemes.

"I'll make all things even one of these days," he had said to himself a thousand times. "I don't intend to serve you always, Philip Penrod. One of these days there will be a rattling among the dry bones, and the police will get their eyes open."

After quitting Floy, Keen Kit sought another part of the city and entered a house where he was surprisedly greeted by a woman of fifty, who filled a large chair so exactly, that she seemed to have grown in it.

Her face was almost repulsive and very florid. The eyes, nearly hidden by the flabby cheeks, twinkled avariciously at sight of the boy spotter.

"I've been waiting for you," said the woman, with a grin. "I thought you would be coming back pretty soon. What does the old fellow offer for the other papers?"

Kit said nothing until he had dropped into a chair a few feet from the woman and directly before her.

"I don't think they're wanted," he replied.

"Not wanted, hey?" retorted the city ogress. "I know better than that! Come! you cannot play with me in that manner, boy. You know that what I've sold Philip Penrod has only whetted his appetite for more. I know human nature. You can't fool me. I'm too old for that, ha, ha!"

"I guess you'll have to take your wares to another market," remarked Kit, soberly. "The fact is, old Penrod thinks himself duped."

"He does, eh?"

"Yes."

Without another word the woman left her chair and crossed the room.

Opening a cupboard in the wall, she took out a small package which she held up in triumph as she looked over her shoulder at Kit.

"He thinks he has been duped, does he?" she repeated, her deep-set eyes glistening more than ever. "I acknowledge that I didn't sell him the best part of the heap. He doesn't know what I hold in my hand. If he did, he wouldn't dare say he had been duped."

Kit looked wistfully at the package.

"What would you say if I were to tell you that they have found the boy?" he queried.

"The boy? What boy?" cried the woman, coming forward with more agility than her figure seemed to warrant.

"Why, the one who brought those papers to New York."

In an instant the ogress stood over the Pavement Sharp, and her eyes were fixed upon him in a strange stare.

Kit wondered what was coming next.

"Who fetched these documents to Gotham?" she cried, shaking the package in his face. "What do you know about him, boy?"

"Keep your head, Kit Kent," thought the young spotter. "You have played a pretty bold hand, and Mother Magnus is interested."

"Do you think I've been around without making any discoveries?" he asked, giving the giantess look for look. "If they've found the boy, those papers may not only prove worthless to you as a marketable quantity, but they might get you into trouble."

Mother Magnus appeared to recoil with a gasp.

"They didn't fall into my hands by any foul means," she suddenly exclaimed. "I reckon a person has a right to turn a penny when accident places one in a way of doing so."

"Certainly," smiled Kit.

"That's just what I'm doing; but I see through the game. The Wizard Cobbler wants to get the goods for nothing. He expects to scare them out of my hands. He has sent you here with the likely story that the person who brought the papers to the city has been found. Pish! If that were true, what good would the documents do Philip Penrod?"

"About as much good as they would do you."

"See here! I don't believe a word of your story!" blurted Mother Magnus. "I'm going to hold on to what I've got. Your master sha'n't scare them from me. They haven't found the boy, as you call him, and you know it!"

Keen Kit now saw that, more than ever before, he had need of a bold countenance, for Mother Magnus was a veritable lioness when aroused, and he did not want to feel her grip.

She was one of the shrewdest "fences" in New York—a woman who covered up her tracks with great ingenuity, and who let no opportunity slip to enrich herself by questionable means. The police knew her, but, such was her tact in a certain direction, that they had utterly failed to get a hold on her.

Kit knew her calling better than she suspected. He knew also the friendship which existed between the Wizard Cobbler and Mother Magnus, and when Old Penrod received a message saying that the woman knew something to his advantage, Kit was at once detailed to conduct negotiations.

It turned out that Mother Magnus had come into possession of certain papers which she thought the shoemaker of New York could get off his hands with profit to himself. She had sold old Philip other things before, and had found him and Kit, the boy go-between, secretive and trustworthy.

Kit had had his eyes opened by Floy's story of her lost brother. He put this and that together, and saw that the papers which Oliver Owlet had obtained from the Wizard Cobbler—papers which he (Kit) had received from Mother Magnus—were the identical ones brought to the city by Paul Fassett.

This was one step toward solving the mystery that hung over the Jersey boy, and the Pavement Sharp was not the person to let further opportunity slip.

When Mother Magnus, grown suspicious, suddenly told him that he knew they had not found Paul Fassett, he saw himself for a moment "in a box."

The big hands of the woman itched to grab him, and Kit knew that, once in their grip, he was liable to have his bones unjointed.

He left his chair and recoiled.

"Do you think I'd deceive you, Mother Magnus?" he asked.

"Yes, if the Wizard Cobbler laid the plan," was the answer. "In the first place, the boy hasn't turned up, and, secondly, I don't give up the papers for nothing."

Kit said nothing, for Mother Magnus's manner told him that she was about to proceed.

"I didn't have to put anybody out of the way for the documents," she went on. "They came to me like a good many other things come—on the wings of luck. I ask no questions and get no lies. My customers are quiet people—when they come to me. We trade with very few words. So the boy who fetched the papers to Gotham has disappeared, eh? You tried to frighten me with the report that he has been found! You are shrewd for your master I

don't blame you. But you must play fair with Mother Magnus."

Kit was about to reply, when a small bell, hanging over the door, sent forth a tinkling sound, and before the woman could cross the room the portal opened, and the head and shoulders of a man appeared.

The sight thrilled the boy sharp.

"Ho!" snapped the man at the door, catching sight of Kit, whose presence in Mother Magnus's establishment seemed in the nature of a surprise—"He's here, is he?"

He would have withdrawn if the woman had not thrown herself forward, and the next moment Kit saw the two close together.

In an instant, as it were, Kit had noted the similarity between the man at the door and the figure he had seen crouching in the hall of Floy's abode, and he did not doubt that they were the same.

Was the man Mother Magnus's spy?

He could not hear what passed between the woman "fence" and the man who had come thus suddenly upon the scene; but when the ogress came back, he saw a cloud of evil on her brow.

"You have lied to me!" ejaculated Mother Magnus.

"I repeat that they haven't found the boy, and you know they haven't! Go and tell your master that he cannot frighten out of me that which I hold. I know what I know. Stay! one moment! I guess Philip Penrod can get along without you for a while. We'll see, anyhow." And before Kit could move, he was seized by the woman's hands and lifted clear of the floor by a grip that seemed to crush his very shoulders.

Then he was carried swiftly across the room.

CHAPTER V.

WHERE PAUL FASSETT WAS.

If Oliver Owlet, the Prince of Gotham, could have witnessed the scenes which have, for a short time, engaged our attention, he would not have smoked at his ease in a certain apartment which his money had furnished in the most elegant manner.

His companion was Leon Layne, the dudish looking fellow who was with him when he encountered Floy on the street near the cigar store.

The two worthies had gone over for the third time the papers for which Owlet had paid Old Penrod the sum of seventy-five dollars; and they had agreed that the person from whom the Wizard Cobbler had obtained the documents was holding back others of greater importance.

"When will you see the lawyer again?" asked Leon, looking across the table at the Prince.

"I promised to see him to-morrow with something 'solid,'" was the response. "But what have we here? We can't fairly start the game with these papers. We must have another link."

Leon nodded acquiescence.

"Are you sure the boy knows nothing?" he queried, eagerly.

"I am."

"That's more than I will say."

Oliver Owlet looked squarely at his companion.

"It was most unfortunate that the boy met with the unlucky accident before we got our hands on him; most unfortunate, I say."

"Yes, but the cobbler is dealing with the person into whose clutches the young man's luggage fell."

"Right you are, Leon!" exclaimed the Prince of Gotham. "We have the boy, they the baggage. Somebody is dealing it out piecemeal in order to realize the most out of the transaction. Now, the question is simply this: With whom is Old Penrod dealing?"

The two men sat silent a few seconds, when the stillness was broken by the fall of Leon's hand upon the table.

"We must watch the cobbler and his boy!" he exclaimed.

"His boy?"

"The young gamin in his employ. Didn't I catch a glimpse of him the first time I ever descended to the old man's den? We saw him again to-night!"

"Where?"

"On the street with Floy."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it!"

"It may be he had business for us, if the two have met."

"That is my opinion exactly. We must keep an eye on the boy. The girl alone can effect nothing. I saw your last words drive every vestige of color from her face. She knows our

power. She suspects that we lured her brother to the city; but she dare not accuse us. She knows better than to do that."

"Ay, she does!" ejaculated Owlet. "By watching the boy, Old Penrod's spy and go-between, we will eventually discover the party who holds the papers which the boy brought to New York. I still curse the ill-fortune that kept me from the depot until after the accident that befell the Jersey boy. If he had not been gawking around like a greenhorn, the cab would not have struck him and tumbled him with his baggage into the middle of the street. Somehow or other, the person who picked up the valise saw the value of the contents, and a freak of fortune has put the Wizard Cobbler upon their trail."

"Why not pump the boy once more?"

"And get the same unsatisfactory answers we had got before?"

"I don't know about that," said Leon with some confidence. "I have always had a lurking notion that the youngster's stubbornness and suspicions have kept something back."

"If I could think so, by George! I'd have the truth before morning."

"It wouldn't hurt us to try."

Oliver Owlet sprung from his chair with a sudden impulse and seized his hat.

"We'll try," cried he. "If he knows any thing, as you suspect, Leon, he shall give us the whole lay, or wish he had!"

The two men left the house and occupied some time in crossing the city to a building near the East River wharves.

They had pulled their hats over their brows, and looked quite unlike their natural selves as they sloped along through the lights and shadows of the streets.

At the door of the house to which their quest led them, Prince Owlet jerked a bell knob, and the portal opened enough to let a pair of ferret-like eyes inspect them a moment before they were admitted.

"How is he?" asked Owlet of the dwarfish figure whom he encountered in the hall.

"About the same," was the reply in a squeaky voice.

The Prince of Gotham led the way to a stairway at the end of the hall and both he and Leon ascended leaving the porter to return to his post and await their return. On the second floor the two men found a door which Owlet unlocked with a key he had received from the man below.

The room beyond was not dark. There was light enough to show the two scoundrels a single bed, and as they crossed the step, a figure sprung up among the sheets and stared at them in amazement.

"Awake, are you?" laughed Oliver Owlet, advancing toward the bed and turning on the gas as he crossed the room.

There was no reply, and in a moment the men were looking at the well-built boy who sat bolt upright in the middle of the couch with an inquisitive look in his wondering eyes.

"You needn't get up unless you want to," continued Owlet. "We are here on a little business which can be transacted where you are."

The boy's countenance fell.

"Then you don't bring me liberty?" said he.

"That depends," was the guarded response. "See here. We are after the whole truth about the accident at the depot. The time has come for it. We don't intend to be duped any longer."

"I don't understand you," rejoined the boy in bed who was the real Paul Fassett, Floy's brother.

"Playing it still!" chuckled Leon. "He's a shrewd one, Oliver!"

Paul gave the speaker a look of indignation.

"If you mean that I have been deceiving you in regard to the loss of my luggage, you are mistaken!" he cried. "I have told the truth and—"

"Come! come!" sternly interrupted Owlet, and his hand dropped heavily upon the almost naked shoulder of the boy. "You are dealing with men, sir! We happen to know that you have kept something back. You were not unconscious when you were picked up after having been struck by the hack. You must have seen the person who took possession of your valise. You did see him."

For a second a flat denial of this statement seemed about to burst from Paul's throat; but, instead of this, a smile passed over his face.

"Strange as it will seem to you," said he, "that whole scene came back fresh to me just before your coming. There were some parts of it

which I had forgotten. They are clear now. I did see the man who had got my valise."

Both Owlet and Leon came closer to the bed.

"I see him distinctly now," continued Paul.

"What is he like?" exclaimed Owlet.

In an instant Paul's face underwent a change.

"No, gentlemen," he replied. "I prefer to keep that much to myself. I cannot describe, for your benefit, the man who grabbed my valise when it was knocked from my grip beyond the cab that run me down."

Owlet looked at Leon, and then with the darkened face of a prince of villains turned to Paul again.

"You won't, eh?" he cried, his voice almost a hiss.

"I cannot," was the response.

"You mean you will not?"

"Just as you like," said Paul.

The following moment the hand of Owlet flew at his throat, but Paul by a dextrous motion warded off.

"You may kill me," said he. "But you shall not receive from me the cards by which you can win the deep and infamous game you are playing."

Instead of making another attempt to seize the boy's throat, Owlet drew back and glared at him with the ferocity of a tiger.

"You will never be able to use the secret you possess," he cried.

"We will wait and see," responded Paul calmly. "I have been lured from home for a purpose. I see through the whole scheme, and I don't propose to help you men to the prize. You have lost track of the valise. You must find it, if you find it all, without my help."

The silence that followed Paul's last sentence lasted a full minute.

"We'll find it!" cried the Prince of Gotham. "A fly like you can never break one of my webs!"

CHAPTER VI.

LANTERN AND SPONGE.

"THE boy is grit to the backbone," remarked Owlet when he and Leon found themselves on the street once more.

"Yes," growled the dandy sharp.

"I did not think he would exhibit such courage under the circumstances. You couldn't have choked the secret from him."

"No, curse him!" was the response. "We must now look after him closer than ever. If free, he would go straight to the police and put them upon the trail of the valise, as well as give us an excellent reputation among the ferrets of Mulberry street. But the boy is safe while Captain Cerberus guards him, and we can turn our attention to Old Philip's spy who carries on negotiations between him and the person who holds the important documents."

The two worthies, bent on bringing to a successful issue the game they were playing, did not know that Kit, the boy sharp, had fallen into the hands of Mother Magnus by whom he was detained against his will.

Had they been possessed of this knowledge, they might have made a ten-strike in a short time.

Kit was in more danger than he at first thought.

When he was led across the room by the female "fence," he expected to be transferred to quarters from which escape would not prove difficult; but the situation soon undeceived him.

Instead of being confined in a dark, dungeon-like cell, he was locked up in a well-lighted apartment with barred windows and a strong door.

"So this is the upshot of an attempt to get information!" exclaimed the boy, when Mother Magnus had departed, leaving him alone. "Oliver Owlet and his gang will have full swing now, and they won't be idle either. I have yet to discover how the boy's papers came into Mother Magnus's hands; but I have an idea that the man I saw at her door had something to do with the transfer. I'm cooped up here like a rat in a trap, with no good place to gnaw out at, and with no one to open the trap to set me free."

Kit inspected his quarters a dozen times before he became satisfied that escape from them without assistance was not to be thought of.

At last he fell to reading and studying the variety of pencil-marks on the walls.

They were, for the most part, unintelligible figures, with marginal notes of different kinds. Kit thought they were plain to Mother Magnus, but to him they were enigmas upon which, save for curious amusement, it was useless to waste time.

But all at once the boy's eyes seemed to dilate

with surprise, and a moment later he was bending forward, with his gaze riveted upon a scrawl which had excited him.

He saw on the dirty wall the name of Philip Penrod, and certain figures below it showed that Mother Magnus had kept a part of her account with the old cobbler on the plastering.

The boy sharp knew that the shoemaker was far from honest, that he had made a good deal of money through his dealings with Mother Magnus; but here, in black and white, was proof of the woman's guilt, and old Philip's rascality.

Kit studied the account with a good deal of delight.

He looked at it until each particular line and letter seemed photographed on his brain, and not until he could have the whole thing before him when he shut his eyes, did he desist from the inspection.

Kit could see from the barred window the countless lights of New York.

He stood there a long time with his thoughts busy with the mystery surrounding Paul Fassett. He wondered what had become of the Jersey boy who had been lured to Gotham by one of the worst villains alive, and the more he thought the firmer grew his resolve, despite his own imperiled situation, to solve the puzzle, and see that the guilty were punished.

At last Kit threw himself down in one corner upon a heap of rags and fell asleep.

His slumber was not deep, but cat-like.

Some time had passed when he distinctly heard the door open.

The boy lay perfectly still, though, by opening one eye carefully and looking out from under his arm, he saw the figure of the city Amazon as it entered the room.

Mother Magnus walked across the floor without noise. She carried in one hand a dark lantern with which she studied the boy on the cot.

Kit lay like a person sound asleep. He was conscious that the sharp eyes of the dangerous woman were upon him, and the slightest stir might prove fatal.

The woman's examination lasted several seconds. She seemed satisfied that Kit's feigned slumber was real.

When she turned away, it was to go straight to the account on the wall—the one that Kit had studied to advantage.

Looking slyly at the woman, the boy detective saw her take a sponge from her pocket and the following moment she had obliterated the writing and the figures.

Kit almost started up with a cry at sight of her work. He watched her swiftly moving hand, and saw by the light of her lantern that the sponge had done the work effectually.

"Too late, Mother Magnus!" inwardly exclaimed the boy. "I've got the whole account in my head, and your sponge can't wipe it out of that. You don't want me to see how much business you've done with Philip Penrod. Of course not! You did not have your wits about you when you put me into this room; but the moment you thought of the sums on the wall, you came hither with bull's-eye and sponge. It's all right, Mother Magnus. I've got the tell-tale transactions where you don't want them."

Satisfied with her work, the woman cast another scrutinizing look upon Kit and left the room as noiselessly as she had entered it.

The boy sharp lay for some time as quiet as if asleep. He did not stir until he was satisfied that Mother Magnus had returned to another part of the house; then he got up and shook himself to make sure that what he had seen had not been a dream.

As to Mother Magnus, she returned to another part of the house where she was met by a dark-faced, evil-looking individual whose countenance exhibited a good deal of anxiety.

"I've fixed it," announced the woman with a grin.

"It would have been better if you had fixed him!" was the growled response.

"We don't need to do that just yet."

"I don't like him," snapped the man. "The boy is dangerous."

Mother Magnus made no reply to this.

"You don't think so," persisted the man. "His visit to you proves enough to satisfy me. He serves Philip Penrod to a certain extent; but all the time he is serving himself, and perhaps the police. Don't I know that he has become acquainted with the girl who says that her brother is lost somewhere in this city?"

"So you have said."

"It is true. The lost boy is the chap whose valise I snatched in the street after the hack had knocked him down. We can't take any

risks, Mother Magnus. If the rat in your trap should gnaw out and discover the connection between the boy and the papers we are trying to sell at high figures, off come our heads! You can see this much, I reckon!"

Mother Magnus acknowledged that Kit's escape would work to their mutual injury.

"But he can't get away," said she with confidence.

"Hal! you don't know what those pavement rats can do," rejoined the man. "They can squeeze through a very small hole, and the same trap never catches them the second time. Let me go up and see if he is asleep yet."

The man left his chair and came up to Mother Magnus.

The full meaning of his last sentence was revealed by his countenance, which was simply diabolical.

"No, I can't do that," said the woman, drawing back. "I left him sound asleep, and I'm sure nothing has occurred since to disturb him."

"I won't hurt him."

The clinched hands of the speaker gave the lie to his words.

But Mother Magnus was firm.

"I tell you that the trap will hold the rat," said she, firmly. "Let him be. We might make headway if we could discover for whom Philip Penrod is buying the papers found in the valise."

"I can find out," was the answer. "I think I could guess without moving out of my tracks."

"Guess, then."

"Well, what would you think if I was to tell you that I have seen the elegant Oliver Owlet go down into the old cobbler's den twice within the past forty-eight hours?"

Madam Magnus uttered an exclamation almost loud enough to have reached Kit's ears.

"Zounds! why didn't I think of him before?" exclaimed the woman. "That man has money enough to enrich us both. If he wants the documents, he will pay for them. He used to be no better than us, Jubal. In fact, he's no better now. I must see the Prince of Gotham before to-morrow night. If he wants the papers, we are all right. No more dealings with the Shylock shoemaker!"

CHAPTER VII.

A STREAK OF LUCK.

THERE was one thing that still greatly puzzled Oliver Owlet and his friend Leon, and that was the whereabouts of the remaining papers which had come to New York in Paul Fassett's valise.

Without them they could not hope to win the game they were playing. Their well-concocted scheme was to get their hands on a certain estate which rightfully belonged to Floy and Paul. This they could do only by the destruction of the documents which Floy had found in her father's chest after his death.

Somehow or other, the cunning Owlet had learned that the brother and sister were the rightful heirs, and he had lured Paul to New York with the all-precious papers.

But the unlucky accident at the depot had deprived him of the documents. Afterward his intercourse with Old Penrod, the Wizard Cobbler, had put him on the trail of the prize, for the shoemaker, who was no more honest than Mother Magnus, had already received notice from the woman to the effect that she had some valuable papers to sell.

If Owlet could find the man who had picked up Paul's valise in the street, he would advance a long stride toward victory. He would then deal direct with the person who had the documents, and not with Old Penrod, who was determined to make every possible dollar out of the transaction.

As we have seen, the two scamps found Paul the prisoner less pliable than was expected. In fact, they had failed to bend him to their will, and the most irritating part of the whole matter was the belief that the boy knew who had found his baggage, but would not tell.

They left Paul in bed in no happy frame of mind.

They did not like the idea of being beaten by a boy, and for some time after their departure, they vented their displeasure in curses.

"If we but had the valise-finder we would be all right," growled Owlet. "There was no use in choking the boy, for he would have stood any amount of it. He suspects, and we shall find him a stubborn customer from now on."

The two men adjourned to a certain saloon some distance from Paul's quarters.

They were there when the thousand and one clocks of New York announced the coming of midnight.

Neither had imbibed much of the vile stuff sold in the place, and they had spent the time discussing plans for the future, none of which struck them as being just the thing.

All at once a repulsive-looking man entered the place and took a seat at a table not far from that occupied by the conspirators.

Owlet looked searchingly at this man, but took good care that his scrutiny should not raise any suspicions.

"Who is he?" queried Leon, in a whisper from across the table.

"They call him Jubal," was the reply.

"Jubal who?"

"Jubal Joff."

"What is he?" was the next question.

"He steers people to the 'fences.'"

"Oho!" grinned Leon, with another glance at the man, who was paying for a mug of ale which he had ordered.

"He is sharp and cool," continued Owlet. "The man would do anything for money. He would betray his master for less coin than Judas got, rather than let the job slip. Here may be our chance."

Leon made no reply, though he did not more than half understand his companion.

Meanwhile Jubal had reached the bottom of his mug, and had caught the eye of Owlet.

The Prince of Gotham seemed to recognize him with a faint smile and nod which were encouraging.

"Won't you take one with us?" queried Owlet, glancing from Jubal to the vacant chair at their table.

The following moment Jubal was in that very chair, apparently a ripe plum ready to be plucked.

Owlet waited until Mother Magnus's friend could see the bottom of his mug.

He first began by inquiring of Jubal if he knew where he could drive a good bargain with some goods not necessary to mention, and Jubal replied that a good deal depended on the condition of the swag. Evidently Jubal knew with whom he was dealing, for he dropped a word here and there which soon led Owlet to throw off all disguise.

"Wouldn't Mother Magnus sooner deal with me direct?" he suddenly asked.

"Yes," answered Jubal, promptly.

"I thought so! What has she got?"

"About everything you want, I guess."

"The papers?"

"The papers."

"That was a quick piece of work, Jubal."

"What was?"

"The catch of the valise."

Jubal fell back and looked at Owlet. A smile broke at his lips.

"Of course you had an eye to business, and were looking out for Number One," continued the Prince. "We don't blame you for that."

"No, no, of course not!" chuckled Jubal Joff.

"When can we see Mother Magnus?" asked Owlet.

"Not at all."

"But we want to deal direct with her."

"You shall. Through me is direct."

"What will secure the documents, all of them, mind you?"

Jubal was silent for a moment.

The shrewd fellow was anxious to strike a good bargain, and secure thereby every dollar he could, both for himself and Mother Magnus.

The two sharps eyed him keenly.

"They're worth a good deal," mused Jubal as if talking to himself, though his words were heard by the eager listeners. "A good round sum, I say."

"Not as much as you think," answered Owlet in careless tones.

"I should say a thousand."

Both Owlet and Leon uttered exclamations of surprise.

"We are not millionaires!" exclaimed the Prince of Gotham.

"Of course not; neither am I," was the quick response. "But," Jubal spoke very resolutely now, "but Mother Magnus won't give the papers away."

"A thousand, then," said Owlet.

An expression of satisfaction overspread Jubal's face, and he nearly strangled on a mouthful of ale.

It was then agreed that at an appointed hour on the following day, Jubal should appear at a certain place, which was, in fact, Owlet's apartments, and deliver over the valuable documents for which he would receive one thousand dollars in hard cash. The joy of the two rascals was unbounded when they saw the form of Jubal vanish toward the street.

"A streak of golden luck!" exclaimed the

prince. "I feel the whole fortune in my hands now! What's a thousand to the prize that has fallen into our clutches by our lucky meeting with Jubal Joff? The man will keep his word. He speaks for Mother Magnus in everything, and she stands up to every bargain he makes. Jubal will be on hand to-morrow, and, though my bank account will be poorer by one thousand dollars, we will be richer than we have ever been!"

"But the boy?"

"Oh, we'll take care of him when we have the documents."

"We can't afford to let him go."

"Who talked about doing that?" exclaimed Owlet. "Some birds die in their cages. We will take care of the one in ours."

"I'm not afraid of the girl," returned Leon. "She is pretty enough to marry some one before long, and, after that, she won't be a thorn in our path any more. We want the papers first. Then we will play the final cards for the big stakes."

"Of course! I know too much about Old Penrod for him to interfere when he finds we have outwitted him, and the boy, the cobbler's spy, who seems inclined to befriend Floy, won't cross arms with us again."

Out they went upon the street with the night verging upon another day. They were pleased, even hilarious, over the prospects ahead, for the streak of luck they had encountered was enough to set their brains in a whirl.

But they did not dream of what was yet to come, and that before many hours should pass.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DASH OF MISFORTUNE.

JUBAL JOFF lost no time in hurrying back to Mother Magnus after his unexpected and, to him, satisfactory interview with Oliver Owlet.

"A thousand dollars for the documents?" cried the female "fence," looking at Jubal in a manner that absolutely chilled his blood. "Where did you carry your head when you made the bargain?"

"On my shoulders, of course!" stammered the man. "I thought I asked enough—"

"Why, you gave them away!" answered Mother Magnus. "I don't stand by any such bargain. Oliver Owlet can't touch the papers at that price! We were holding them back for something big, and here you want to make him a present of them."

"Well, we can repudiate the agreement," said Jubal.

"Of course, but he knows where they are. The Prince of Gotham is one of the shrewd ones."

"Do you fear him?"

"Not exactly that; but he is dangerous just the same. He will manage to get the papers somehow. What has become of the boy who lost them?"

Jubal shook his head.

"I'd like to find out," continued Mother Magnus.

"I wouldn't know where to begin a hunt for him," replied he.

"What became of him after the accident?"

"I don't know. When I had secured the valise, I didn't stop to look after the boy."

Mother Magnus was silent for a few moments.

"Mr. Owlet can't have the documents for a thousand dollars. They're worth double that sum," said she. "I want you to go out and look for the boy. Somebody will know what became of him, whether he went to the hospital or not. Steer clear of Oliver Owlet and his friend, and keep away from Old Penrod. The cobbler won't send his boy spy here because we have him in a cage. No man like Owlet must beat us. It is getting light now, and you can sleep after you have investigated the boy's disappearance."

Jubal shrunk from the house and Mother Magnus was left alone.

It soon occurred to her to look after the prisoner in the room where she had used her sponge with some effect, and Jubal had barely left the building, ere she was on her way to Kit's cage.

Another day had broken over the city, and on this trip the woman had no recourse to a lantern.

She opened the door softly in expectation of finding the boy sharp still asleep on the pallet of rags in one corner; but a moment later she stood spellbound on the threshold with very little color in her hitherto florid cheeks.

The bird had flown!

It was all Mother Magnus could do to keep back an exclamation of horror. She could hardly credit the evidence of sight, yet there was the unoccupied pallet and, what was more

suggestive still, a piece of twisted goods tied to one of the iron bars at the window.

With more celerity than her bulk seemed to warrant, Mother Magnus crossed the room and reached the window. She saw at a glance that two of the bars had been cut, leaving an opening large enough to admit of Kit's escape.

"He could not have had a saw when I left him here," thought the woman. "I made sure of that when I shut the door. It is possible that he ran across the implement somewhere in the room. At any rate, this is a bit of downright bad luck, and if I had let Jubal have his way, it would not have occurred."

The twisted pieces of cloth, which formed one continuous line and dangled from the outer sill toward a sloping roof some twenty feet beneath the window, told the woman that Kit had taken desperate chances and effected his escape.

She did not look long, it was not necessary; but, taking in the rope and casting it into one corner with an ejaculation of rage, she left the room in an unpleasant frame of mind.

"If he tries to injure me, woe to him!" cried Mother Magnus. "I'm too much for a boy like him. The next time it won't be a cage with a live bird in it!" and the woman showed her teeth in a grin which boded Kit no good in the future.

If the woman had reached the room a few minutes sooner, she might have intercepted a flight which she had been too late to check.

Kit, in overhauling the various articles that formed his pallet, found concealed in the lining of a coat a saw which had at one time, no doubt, been the property of a crook of some kind. Of course he did not know how the garment had come into Mother Magnus's possession, though, in the woman's eyes, it had doubtless got there "legitimately," and such was his joy over the find, that he was not disposed to question its right to be there.

The finding of the saw, which was strong and delicate, suggested immediate escape.

The boy's deft fingers soon formed a rope from the old garments that composed the pallet, and the saw, doing its work on the window bars, enabled him to quit the den without much ceremony. The roof below proved but a breathing station on the road to freedom, and before long he stood once more on the stones of New York!

Kit was not the person to linger long in the neighborhood where he was likely to be seen by the very eyes he wanted to avoid, and he had barely reached the street when he sprung away through the faint light of early morning and vanished.

Some time afterward he darted into an open doorway and knocked at a portal on the second floor.

In a moment the surprised face of Floy greeted him.

"An early bird!" exclaimed the girl, with a laugh. "I am sure you have news for me."

"I have a story to tell," was the reply.

"About Paul?"

"Not yet. We haven't progressed that far."

Floy's countenance fell.

"You see we know where the papers are," said Kit, when he had finished the story of his adventures. "They are in Mother Magnus's possession, and the woman is trying to sell them in the best market she can find. She does not know—or, at least I think she does not—that Oliver Owlet is the man who takes from Old Penrod what she sells him. Should she find this out, she would try to deal direct with the Prince of Gotham. Now, Floy, we must find out how the papers fell into her hands, and what became of Paul."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the sister, eagerly.

"It is possible that Owlet got Paul, but missed the documents."

"Do you think so?"

"I do. I am nearly confident that Paul is not at Mother Magnus's. I am going back to the real starting-point of the trail—to Paul's arrival in the city. You know when he left home?"

"I can tell you that to the minute."

"Very well."

"He left on the daylight train—the first one—and on the day I have already given you."

"Then, I know when he reached the city. One of the keenest policemen on the force is on duty at the depot at that hour. He sees everybody, and Paul, dressed as you described, must have attracted his attention."

"I am sure you will find a clew!" exclaimed the girl.

"Don't be too sure," was Kit's response. "We have odds against us. We must fight Mother Magnus and Oliver Owlet and his schemes. I'm

going to do my best, though. Good-by, now. If I run across good news, I'll report in a jiffy."

Floy saw the boy sharp depart with a smile of hope. It seemed to her that light was breaking at last, and that her long quest for the lost was bearing fruit.

As to Kit, he went direct to the depot where he knew Paul Fassett had landed, if he had ever reached his destination.

His keen eyes soon caught sight of a tall, good-looking policeman who at that moment seemed unemployed.

The young detective of Gotham was soon at his side.

"Hello! where have you been so long?" exclaimed the cop, looking down into Kit's face.

Kit said with a smile that "business" had kept him away, but added, in the same breath, that "business" had also brought him back.

Thereupon he proceeded to tell the policeman about lost Paul Fassett, but before he was half done he was stopped by his listener.

"I recollect the boy!" said the policeman. "They brought him into the depot after the cab had knocked him down, and soon afterward he went away with a man who had come to meet him."

Kit started at this information.

"What was the man like?" he asked.

"He was nice-looking—a little too nice to be exactly square, I afterward thought," was the reply.

"Did he have a dark mustache and pointed goatee?"

"He had."

"I think I know him!" exclaimed Kit. "And he took the boy and baggage away?"

"Not the baggage. That was picked up by some scoundrel in the street."

"Oh!" ejaculated Kit, a sudden light breaking in upon him. "Just as I suspected; Oliver Owlet got the boy, but the valise found its way to Mother Magnus!"

He thanked the policeman and departed.

"I've got a clew now!" he said to himself. "I am on the trail of Paul Fassett at last; and Mother Magnus and Prince Owlet of Gotham shall not baffle me!"

CHAPTER IX.

JUBAL ON THE TRAIL.

In a rather small up-stairs office, which was not unlike hundreds of others to be found in New York, sat two men, one of whom the reader has frequently encountered since the opening of our story.

This person was Mr. Oliver Owlet, and the expression he wore at the time indicated that, if everything was not moving along entirely to his notion, he was not altogether displeased.

His companion was a sharp-looking, hatchet-faced man, some ten years the sharper's senior, with a certain legal air which betrayed his calling.

Sedley Saturn was a lawyer of a certain class. He attended to that branch of the business which involved the settlement of estates, the proving of heirships, and the like.

In this he had won a certain success which, in some instances, was not very much to his credit.

The Prince of Gotham had called on the lawyer on a matter of business in which the reader is interested.

"I think you've got a good case," remarked the lawyer, whose opinion was always in the market. "In absence of the papers mentioned, the De Nestor estate would descend to your friend, Mr. Layne. But should the documents ever be found, Mr. Layne would have to look out."

"Certainly," answered Owlet. "I think I can say positively that the papers, supposed to have been in existence, will never turn up."

"That would fix Mr. Layne all right," rejoined the lawyer.

"But," Owlet leaned across the table with the air of a man about to put a very important question, "but suppose parties, claiming to have seen the lost papers, should turn up? What then?"

"They must produce the documents," said Sedley Saturn firmly.

Oliver Owlet seemed to smile to himself.

He took a crisp fifty-dollar bill from his pocket and pushed it toward the lawyer, who took it with a business bow.

It was a generous fee.

"I guess that's all," remarked Owlet, picking up his hat, and with a cheery "good-morning," which was as cheerily returned, he left the lawyer to his reflections and the fifty-dollar bill.

As the rascal emerged from the building, he was spied by a keen-eyed boy who had been

watching the doorway for some time, and when he moved off, he was closely followed.

Keen Kit, the boy sharp, was still on the trail, and now that he had found Owlet, he was determined not to lose him.

The schemer of New York led Kit through several streets and finally to the shaded benches of Union Square.

On one of these sat a man evidently waiting for some one, and when Owlet joined him, the boy sharp had no difficulty in recognizing Leon Layne, the villain's fellow conspirator.

Kit thought it almost impossible to catch a word of what the men were saying, when discovering that they were busy with their backs turned toward a certain quarter, he resolved to make an attempt in that direction.

Falling back, he soon approached the men from the right point, and before long he found himself within hearing distance.

Owlet finished reporting the lawyer's opinion when he came up, and then the two men discussed a plan which Kit knew meant the invasion of some house in quest of something of the utmost importance to them.

His knowledge and ingenuity supplied the rest.

"You are going to give Mother Magnus a call," said Kit to himself while he watched the pair. "Wolf is going to rob wolf, and, if it wasn't for one thing, I'd like to see it done. Just now, however, I'm deeply interested in this matter, and I can't afford to let you have everything your own way. Mother Magnus wouldn't thank me for any warning I might give. On the contrary, she would most likely detain me, and give me stronger quarters than I before enjoyed under her roof. So I won't call in person. If the documents fall into Owlet's hands, they are lost forever! I'd rather see them stick to Mother Magnus's fingers awhile longer."

The young detective continued to watch the two scoundrels until they concluded their talk, and when they moved away he followed and saw them enter a saloon and *cafe* where he knew they would be engaged for some time.

While engaged in spying Owlet and Leon, Kit was watched, though he knew it not, by a pair of eyes which scintillated with a good deal of malignance.

"A fool for luck!" mentally exclaimed the owner of the *obs*, a forbidding looking fellow. "If she had let me have my way when I wanted it, I wouldn't be here eying the bird that got away. Thank fortune, I won't have to consult her now. I'll be my own master, and if I get a chance, woe to the young spy who already knows too much!"

It is needless to inform the reader that the speaker was Jubal Joff, the evil agent and friend of Mother Magnus. Ever since Kit's escape from the "fence's" establishment, he had been looking for him, and the moment he caught sight of him watching Owlet and Leon, his delight knew no bounds.

"Yes, woe to Kit if he should fall into the clutches of this human hyena, for Jubal Joff, in a case of this kind, when a good deal of money was at stake, knew no mercy, and never leaned to the side of pity."

He slouched after Kit with very little noise, and with much caution which he knew how to use when occasion required.

Now and then he was close upon the boy's heels; but at no time did he spring forward to seize his prey, though often strongly tempted to do so.

Jubal saw Kit track Owlet and Leon to the *cafe* and then start out for himself.

"Now," thought the city hyena, "I'll have something in my hands before this chase is over, or my name's not Jubal Joff!"

On, on went Kit until he dodged into a narrow alley-like street and disappeared beyond the threshold of a frame building where he was as well known as at Old Penrod's.

"Mercy," said he to the poorly clad middle-aged woman who met him in the doorway. "I want a bit of paper and an envelope."

The woman smiled.

"Can't you get acquainted with her without writing, Kit?" she inquired.

"It isn't that kind of a case," returned the boy, good-naturedly. "I want paper and envelope just now worse than I do a sweetheart."

The woman went and found a half-sheet of note-paper—not very clean—and a small envelope which she handed to Kit, and then left the room.

The boy sharp drew a chair up to the clothless table and went to work on the task he had assigned to himself.

He seemed to study the phraseology of each sentence before it fell from the point of his pen-

cil, for he wrote slowly, and after awhile he had produced the following:

"MOTHER MAGNUS:—You want to keep a hawk's eye on certain papers in your possession, for you are to be robbed by a keen fellow who has despaired of getting them at a fair price. This comes from a person who knows what he is writing about. You don't want to neglect this warning, for you may be held to answer for the safety of the documents."

When Kit had finished his task he signed to it the words, "One who Knows," and then sealed up the letter.

All this time there leaned against the house outside, with eyes close against the slats of the shutter, the repulsive figure of Jubal Joff, the spy of the female "fence."

He could see that the boy sharp was framing an important letter of some kind, and, in consequence, he was all eagerness in regard to it.

Never did cat watch a mouse with more attention than Jubal paid to Kit. He appeared willing to give his very head to know what the boy had written.

At last, when Kit showed signs of quitting the house, Jubal drew back and sloped away until the boy came forth, then, as soon as his back was turned upon him, he threw himself upon the trail once more.

"Ab! the very man I'm looking for!" exclaimed a voice, as Jubal almost ran against a man whom he had not seen in his desire to keep Kit in sight.

An exclamation of surprise burst from the fellow's throat.

"Don't run off," continued the same voice. "You broke your promise to me. You kept away from the appointed place. Did she repudiate the bargain?"

"She would not listen to it," was the reply. "I was entirely too low for her. She wants five thousand, and—"

"She can keep the papers! We don't want 'em!" and the next instant Jubal was released, none the worse for his sudden collision with Oliver Owlet, Prince of Gotham.

Of course Jubal's first look was after Kit, and, catching sight of a figure which he took to be the boy's, he sprung away with his old eagerness renewed.

But when he reached the spot, he found no one who looked, familiar, and the fence's ferret had the pleasure of venting his spleen upon Owlet who had stopped him just long enough to let his young prey get away.

It was fortunate for Kit, for a time, at least.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.

MEANTIME Kit had mailed the warning he had written to Mother Magnus, and, satisfied with his work, had gone back, for the first time in many hours, to Old Penrod, the cobbler.

The young Pavement Sharp knew that, in due course of time, the letter would fall into proper hands and did not concern himself about it.

If he could prevent Oliver Owlet from getting by trickery that which he had failed to secure by purchase, he would score a great victory, for, as he had argued to himself, he would sooner see the important papers in the fence's hands than in Owlet's.

Mother Magnus never got much mail. Her friends were not of that sort who intrust their business to paper, therefore, when she received through the regular post-office channels, a rather dingy looking envelope, she was at a loss to account for the event.

Kit had posted his warning in time to place it in the woman's hands by the afternoon delivery, and it was not a minute behind time.

If the boy could have seen the expression of astonishment that overspread Mother Magnus's face when she had mastered the letter, he would have smiled in spite of himself.

"Here's a go!" she exclaimed, her eyes fairly flashing. "Going to rob me, eh? We'll see how they succeed with the game! They'll never want to pluck another pigeon in New York, nor elsewhere. Ah! here is Jubal. The very man I want!"

Jubal Joff, who appeared on the scene at this moment, was pounced upon with great eagerness by Mother Magnus, and the letter thrust into his hands.

"That's it!" cried Jubal, with a glance. "That's the letter he wrote in the house in the alley."

"Are you sure?" queried the woman, to whom Jubal had already related his adventure with Kit.

"Don't I recognize the paper and the envelope?" was the quick retort. "I'd swear to both of 'em!"

"It's very queer," said the woman, "that he should befriend me after what has happened."

Jubal grinned,

"That boy's cute!" he exclaimed. "Ten to one that he's helping himself while he's doing you a favor. You don't catch old Penrod's fox napping. I'd choke him all the same, though, if I got a chance," Jubal's brows darkened. "You don't want to think that he wants us to make a fortune out of the dockments. He wants to keep 'em out o' Prince Owlet's hands. That's the game. Confound the boy! He's too slippery for me!"

Having been convinced by Jubal that the warning was genuine, Mother Magnus prepared to receive the expected robbers.

The papers, so valuable to two young people, were put away in a place considered more secure than the one which had held them. As night approached, Jubal was sent out to see if he could find Owlet about any of his old haunts, and get word to Mother Magnus in advance of his coming.

The woman waited a long time for Jubal, but he did not come.

Her establishment never kept open long after sundown, though, to the initiated, there was an entrance which was never closed.

Confident that Jubal had not forgotten his mission, Mother Magnus at last retired to her private quarters on the second floor, resolved not to close an eye in slumber until her spy's return. Hour after hour passed. The thousand and one noises in the street died away, and by midnight the great thoroughfare was quiet and nearly deserted.

By this time Mother Magnus, worn out with watching, had succumbed to slumber. She had stretched her huge form upon a handy cot and was fast asleep.

The witching hour of midnight passed and the stars began to indicate the slow approach of another day.

All at once Mother Magnus found herself sitting upon the edge of the bed.

She was at first inclined to think that a startling dream had awakened her; but the next few seconds told her that some one was in the house.

A door which she had closed was ajar!

It opened into a small room where Jubal slept on a pallet whenever he passed a night in the house.

Perhaps her spy had come back, and, finding her asleep, had gone to bed without disturbing her.

Mother Magnus, who was in her stocking feet, arose softly and moved across the room.

There was light enough to let her see the door and to give her a faint view of the interior of the other room. She crossed the threshold, and had taken but one step toward the pallet when the door shut, and she turned to hear the key click in the lock!

She was a prisoner in Jubal's room!

For a moment Mother Magnus was too much surprised to realize her situation.

The shutting of the door had left her in total darkness, but she knew where the portal was as well as if she could see it.

To Mother Magnus one thing was certain.

The robber had come.

He had stolen a march upon her while she slept, and, despite the caution secured by Keen Kit's warning, he had gained an entrance to the very room that held the treasure!

These thoughts sent the hot blood surging through the woman's brain. She thought of Oliver Owlet finding the documents where she had concealed them, for, with her imprisoned in the dark room, he could search the house at his leisure.

Suddenly the Amazon of Gotham went toward the door.

She found it with her hands and then drew back a step, an unseen look of determination on her flushed face.

She was big enough to break down any door—a living battering-ram which could not be successfully resisted.

All at once she advanced another step, and then launched herself with the fury of a tigress at the door. She struck it squarely and sent it into the other room with a crash, at the same time following it like a bomb.

The door, falling flat on the floor, left Mother Magnus standing erect in the center of the apartment.

At the same time a human figure sprung erect near her bed, and the quick eyes of the mad woman detected the dark mask which concealed the face.

For Mother Magnus to see this man was for her to dart at him with the same spirit with which she had assaulted the door. She did not

stop to consider what the consequences might be. No thought of the man being armed ever entered her mind.

Five seconds had barely passed between the fall of the door and her discovery of the masked burglar. The man himself had no time to prepare for the encounter so close at hand, but, as Mother Magnus leaped at him, his hand dropped toward his pocket, and was lifted again—all in an instant of time.

Despite his hasty preparation for defense, the masked man was seized by the eager hands of the woman and jerked clear of the floor.

Mother Magnus's strength was prodigious.

She bore the burglar back toward the wall between two windows, as if she would crush the plastering with him, then, suddenly disengaging one hand, she stripped the mask from his face, revealing by the dim gas jet the white skin of Oliver Owlet, Prince of Gotham!

"I thought so!" exclaimed Mother Magnus. "I knew you were coming to-night; but accursed sleep took possession of my eyes. I've got you now, ha, ha! You want to steal what you cannot buy at your own price, do you? Well, Prince Owlet, you have found that the cat sleeps lightly. When you get the documents, let me know!"

The man heard these words with a tensely drawn visage.

He had by no means given up the fight. He knew the strength and the merciless character of the woman into whose clutches he had fallen.

Suddenly he twisted himself half out of Mother Magnus's hands.

The Amazon of New York attempted to regain the ground thus lost; but this time she met the glitter of a knife. She went straight at Owlet again, but as she caught him, he struck twice in rapid succession, each time sending the blade through her arm, and drawing from her loud cries of pain.

The blows broke the enraged woman's power.

She fell back, and Owlet, taking advantage of his success, threw her half-way across the room, and made a dash for the door. As he gained it, he was confronted by a man who suddenly appeared there, and the following moment he was attacked by Jubal with all the fury of a wolf.

Mother Magnus, with a cry, threw herself into the battle, and all at once there was heard the crash of a broken window, and the woman and her spy held their breath as they saw a human figure drop out of sight below the sill!

Oliver Owlet had disappeared, and Jubal and the woman held possession of the field.

CHAPTER XI.

CAUGHT AT HIS WORK.

THERE stood not far from the scene of these events, and on the street below, a boy who seemed to know from his look that something exciting was transpiring under Mother Magnus's roof.

Having sent the letter of warning, which we saw him indite, Kit, the Pavement Shadow, was determined to see the play out, if it was to take place.

With this design in view, he was on guard in the neighborhood when Oliver Owlet made his descent upon the Amazon's establishment, though he did not witness Owlet's success.

It was not long before a startling sound from the house told him that the burglar had been discovered, and his knowledge of the woman's strength assured him that she was abundantly able to take care of herself.

By and by there came to Kit's ears the sound of breaking glass, and the following minute a dark figure was seen to drop from one of the second-story windows.

Instead of falling headlong from the house, as Kit feared he would, the man caught the sash at the risk of cutting his hands, and dropped to the ground with no apparent damage to his person.

Kit recognized the man as Oliver Owlet, but before he could get a good look at the fellow, he had vanished with a terrible curse, which seemed to indicate that his mission had not been wholly successful.

The crashing of the window was not unheard, but by the time half a dozen curious people, including a policeman, had reached the scene, Owlet was out of sight.

An investigation followed.

Mother Magnus was compelled to open up her house, and she told a somewhat thrilling story how she had been visited by a burglar, and how, after a desperate battle, she had thrown him against the window, with the result already known.

As to her visitor's identity, Mother Magnus

was silent. She admitted that he had stabbed her twice in the arm, but not seriously enough to send her to the hospital. Indeed, she would have died under her roof rather than leave it, for during her absence the house might be searched with disastrous results to herself.

An hour later Jubal Joff and his mistress were alone again and undisturbed.

"I owe that boy something," said Mother Magnus. "I guess you're glad now you did not choke him."

"I don't know about that," growled Jubal. "He sent the warning not because he likes you, but because he is playing a slick game of his own."

"I can't help that, but I'm obliged to him all the same," persisted the female fence. "But for the warning, we would have lost the documents; as it is, we've got them yet; I guess Prince Owlet won't repeat the visit. He may thank his stars that he didn't break his neck in the drop to the sidewalk."

As to the man under discussion, he had hurried to his old quarters where he found Leon half-asleep in a big chair with an empty wine bottle on the table before him.

Owlet frowned darkly when he halted near this tableau, but the next second he sprung forward and shook Leon from his stupor with the roughness of a bear.

"Ho! you, is it?" stammered the young man. "I can't say that I was looking for you so soon. By Jove! it's near morning," he looked at his watch. "Of course you got them and made our fortunes?"

"I got pitched through a window for my pains," was the response.

"The deuce you did! But, then, if you got the papers, you can stand that little episode."

With a strange grin on his face, Owlet proceeded to turn his pockets wrong side out, and Leon's face changed color and got a disappointed look.

"You didn't get them, I see!" he exclaimed.

"Hang it, no!" snapped the Prince of Gotham.

"I roused the cat and had my hands full a moment afterward. Jehu! what an Amazon she is! But the worst of it all is, that she was expecting me."

"Expecting you?" almost gasped Leon. "I don't understand that."

"It is somewhat of a mystery to me," said Owlet. "My head hasn't been clear enough since to get at the bottom of it. Somebody betrayed our scheme."

"It seems impossible!"

"It was done, though."

"By whom?"

Owlet made no reply.

"Mother Magnus has a spy," resumed Leon.

"He was there. He came on the scene in the nick of time and turned the battle against me. But for Jubal Joff's display of tiger blood, I might have succeeded."

"Is he the traitor?"

"I cannot think so. We discussed our scheme a little in the Park, and I am sure he wasn't around then. His appearance on the scene, I am sure, was accidental; but all the same Mother Magnus told me that I was expected."

"Curse the informer, I say!" growled Leon.

"We must do more than that. I'm going to hunt him down and get even!"

"We will have to find him first."

"Of course. I know of one person who would have posted Mother Magnus if he could."

"Who is he?"

"The gamin rat—the boy who has taken up with Floy."

"Old Penrod's spy and go-between, eh!" cried Leon.

"No one else."

"By Jupiter! I think we're getting at the puzzle," replied the young man. "I see no other solution. It would be natural for the boy to serve his master by baffling us. He may have overheard us in the Park. I was not on the lookout for boy spies there. Never mind, Leon; it won't take me long to get at the truth, and when I have it, the gamin shadow will wish he had never seen the sunlight in the streets of New York!"

"We'll have to work under cover. The police may get a description of you from Mother Magnus—"

"They will get nothing of the kind!" interrupted Owlet. "Mother Magnus, with the excellent reputation she bears, doesn't intend to get before the police courts. She'll keep the secret, but she'll guard the documents closer than ever, and put us to extra trouble to win the game. We'll win it, though, Leon. The stakes are worth fighting for. The next card we throw

will rake in the prize. I'd like to see Mother Magnus and a boy beat two old heads like us."

The two men laughed together and a fresh bottle of wine put both in still better humor.

Fortunately Owlet had escaped from his perilous adventure at Mother Magnus's house without any serious hurts. The loss of his mask was the greatest misfortune, for it enabled the woman to recognize him and to guess the object of his midnight visit.

If she had not broken down the door by her impetuous charge, Owlet believed that he would have found the important papers, for it was natural that Mother Magnus should conceal them near her person. He had underrated the strength of the Amazon when he shut her up in the dark room, and her sudden appearance almost took his breath.

The next time he would be more careful; he would know how to deal with the woman, and he told Leon that he would visit the house, if he ever went there again in person, ready to cope with its powerful tenant.

Prince Owlet was resolved not to let grass grow under his feet, as the saying is.

It was still early morning when he began to look for Kit.

Knowing where Floy lodged, he thought he would be likely, sooner or later, to find the boy sharp in that neighborhood, and the rising sun found the schemer "on guard" there.

Hour after hour passed and Owlet did not desert his post. He was patience itself.

At length there appeared to the keen eye of the watcher the figure of the young shadower.

Among the many people on the street Owlet was quick to distinguish the form for which he had watched, and, when once spotted, Kit was under a surveillance that did not desert him for an instant.

"I'll show you what tit for tat means!" cried the Prince of Gotham, while he eyed the boy with his hands clinched and a frown on his face. "Come a little closer and give me a square look at you. Yes, you're the bird I want. By Jove! I think I see victory in your eye. You are eager to tell the girl how you baffled Oliver Owlet last night. It was well done, I'll admit; but I'll show you something better."

By this time, totally unconscious of the villain's presence, Kit had nearly reached Floy's abode.

The open hallway invited him to enter.

"I'll wait till you come down," murmured Owlet, as Kit gained the door.

The next moment a loud cry in the street caused the Prince of Gotham to turn, and to his horror he saw a young girl under the hoofs of a team which had just knocked her down.

In an instant, as it were, a lithe figure shot past him, and he saw the child snatched from death by a boy who, turning toward the sidewalk with the prize, caught his eye and recognized him.

Oliver Owlet, with an ejaculation he could not suppress, found himself discovered.

CHAPTER XII.

KIT'S BOSS CLEW.

"HA! watching me, are you, Prince Oliver!" thought Kit. "But for the accident to the little girl I should not have discovered your little game. Make hay while the sun shines, Owlet. You did not succeed last night, else you would not be here keeping an eye on me."

By this time Kit, whose rescue of the child was a most daring act, had relinquished his burden to a policeman, who thoughtfully inquired after his name and address.

He again turned to look for Owlet, but that individual had disappeared as completely as if the sidewalk had opened and swallowed him. Kit was somewhat amused. The rascal's disappearance confirmed him in the belief that he had been watched, and he resolved to keep a sharp lookout for the man of many plots.

As modest as he was brave, the boy shadower did not stop to inquire who he had rescued from death, but in a moment he was out of the congratulating crowd, and was bounding up the stairs that led to Floy's lodgings.

"It was well done!" exclaimed the girl, her eyes sparkling with joy as she crossed the room to greet the boy.

"What was?"
"Oh, I saw it all from my window!" was the quick response.

"Of course I couldn't help it, Floy," said Kit. "I would have done that much for any one, I guess; even for the man who was watching me awhile ago."

The girl lost color.
"Who was watching you, Kit?" she asked.

"The elegant Prince Owlet," smiled Kit.

"Perhaps he was waiting for me to come down."

"No, Floy; I am the bird he had his eyes on. He has reasons for watching me, if he knows how to put two and two together since last night. The accident brought us face to face. It has put me on my guard, and Owlet won't score the easy victory he was after."

An hour passed over Kit's head in Floy's little room.

He had no secrets from the anxious girl. While he could not give her much hope concerning her missing brother, he was not without hope himself, and the fact that the important papers were still in existence, though in Mother Magnus' hands, gave Floy some comfort.

"Oliver Owlet must not get those papers. He would destroy them!" exclaimed the Jersey girl.

"That is true. While they exist he can't win the stakes in the game. Mother Magnus has purposely kept the most valuable of the papers back for a ten-strike. She knows their worth, and Owlet will have to pay her price for them or get them by forcible means. She saved them last night, and when I saw the Prince of Gotham fall from the window I felt that I had not written my warning letter in vain. Now, we want those papers just as badly as Owlet does, Floy."

"But Mother Magnus will not surrender them. We can't pay a tithe of what she wants for them, Kit."

A smile appeared at the boy's lips.

"We don't happen to be millionaires with a bank account at our disposal," said he, "therefore, I sha'n't go to Mother Magnus with a big check for the fortune papers. As you say, Oliver Owlet must not get his fingers on them. He shall not!"

"I never knew what a friend was until I came to this great city!" exclaimed Floy.

Kit blushed to the roots of his hair and stammered forth a reply that amused his companion.

"Mind, I don't expect anything for what I'm doing," he replied. "I want to help you beat those precious rascals who lured Paul, your brother, to New York for an infamous purpose of their own. And if I don't do it in the end, Floy, just look for Kit Kent to retire from business as a shadower."

When Kit left the house he was on the alert for the evil shadow of Oliver Owlet, but use his eyes as best he could he could not see anything of that scoundrel.

He was not sure that he was not watched again by the same sharp eyes which had seen him a short time before; but he managed to reach his own quarters without, he hoped, having been shadowed.

When he entered the little room which he used when he was not at the Wizard Cobbler's, what was his surprise to find on the table a sealed note, which he took up with nervous hands.

Kit broke the seal with unconcealed eagerness, and read the following, in a copperplate hand—the finest specimen of writing he had ever seen:

"Will Mr. Kit Kent, who so gallantly rescued from death a little girl this afternoon, call at No. 1001—th avenue, immediately after reading this? The writer desires very much to see him, and she assures him here that it will be to his advantage to call." Gratefully,

"MRS. VAN DEVEER."

Kit read the note two or three times before he laid it aside.

"I won't let her give me anything for what I did!" he cried. "I guess that's about what she wants with me. I'll go anyhow, as it wouldn't look very polite not to," and, hiding the letter in his bosom, Kit picked up his hat and went out.

Knowing the ins and outs of New York as he did, Kit was not long finding 1001—th avenue. It turned out to be a handsome house, with dark sandstone steps, and a polished door that reflected his image when he halted in front of it.

His ring brought a servant in view, and Kit was ushered into a sumptuous parlor, where he was told to await the coming of Mrs. Van Deveer.

It was not long before a well-dressed lady of thirty entered, leading a little girl, whose cheeks got a glow of delight the moment she spied Kit.

It was the little one he had rescued from the hoofs of the team.

Mrs. Van Deveer began by thanking Kit profusely for his gallant action, and all the while the boy sharp stood speechless and blushing in the center of the room.

"My daughter was returning from a visit to a cousin on the West Side," said Mrs. Van Deveer. "A few minutes before the accident she picked up a curious paper which had a nail attached to it. I must show it to you, Mr. Kit, for it may really mean what it says."

Mrs. Van Deveer took from her pocket a carefully folded piece of brownish paper, to which, as she had said, a nail was attached by means of a string.

"Alice can tell exactly where she picked it up, so vivid is her memory," the mother went on.

"I can take Mr. Kit straight to it," exclaimed the child.

By this time the paper had been unfolded, and was in Kit's hands.

The first sentence startled him, and then, with feelings not to be described, he read what follows:

"To the World:—I, Paul Fassett, am a prisoner, I know not where. I am kept in confinement by a villain named Oliver Owlet, who lured me to New York for a dark purpose of his own. I am on the third floor of a building, and my main window looks out upon a tall white chimney which has lost one corner. Let the person who finds this, if it is ever found, place it in the hands of the police. My sister Floy, who must be distressed at my disappearance, may have come to New York in search of me. For Heaven's sake rescue me and punish the villain who is at the head of the scheme against us and our rightful fortune. He will do his worst if I don't reveal a certain secret which he wants. I pray that this may fall into the right hands, and that I may be saved from the clutches of these human spiders."

"PAUL FASSETT."

Kit's eyes showed his excitement when he raised them to Mrs. Van Deveer and her child.

"I think the paper has fallen into the right hands," he exclaimed.

"What! do you know Paul Fassett?" queried the lady.

"I know of him," was the rejoinder. "I have been looking for him for the sister who is now in New York," and Kit turned eagerly to little Alice. "I would risk my life a thousand times for this paper. Tell me where you found it, please."

Eager to oblige the boy to whom she owed so much, Alice Van Deveer answered Kit in a manner that filled his eyes with a happy glow.

"I know the place!" said the boy shadow. "You need not take me to it, Alice. I believe I can go straight to the house that holds Paul Fassett. This is the best clew I ever picked up," And overcome with eagerness, Kit was quitting the room when the hand of Mrs. Van Deveer detained him.

"Not a dollar, madam!" said Keen Kit, pushing aside the check the lady was thrusting forward. "I'm more than paid now. You've given me a clew to Paul's whereabouts, and that is enough. I don't rescue children for money. Forgive me. I hope I'm not rude!" And, not waiting for a reply, Kit almost ran from the house, and did not slacken his gait until he found himself bareheaded half a block away.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOUND!

POSSESSED of a clew which he thought would enable him to find Paul Fassett, Kit was eager to begin the new hunt.

He was sure he could find the place rather vaguely described by the note which little Alice Van Deveer had picked up on the street; but he expected to have trouble in rescuing Paul, if indeed he rescued him at all.

Kit was always on the lookout for Prince Owlet of Gotham whom he had caught watching him with an evil eye near Floy's doorway. He knew the crafty cunning of the rascal at the bottom of the deep game against the Fassett's and their fortunes, and it behoved him to watch Owlet and his confederate Leon.

The best directory to the Jersey boy's prison was the brief description of the chimney to be seen from his window.

There might be a hundred tall white chimneys in New York; but this one had a peculiarly broken corner which Kit, when unengaged and with plenty of time on his hands, had observed with speculative curiosity.

It was the strangest thing in the world that this chimney should play an important part in the search for Paul Fassett, but Kit could have wished for nothing better.

He was not long crossing the ground that lay between Floy's lodgings and the home of the tall chimney.

He found it lifting its head toward the sky, its broken corner in the same condition as when he last saw it.

The sight of the chimney greatly inspired Kit.

Of course it was evident, from the "lay of the land," that Paul could not see the chimney from the front windows of any building on the same side of the street, and he quickly concluded that Paul was a captive elsewhere.

It suddenly occurred to Kit, who was familiar with the neighborhood, that Prince Owlet could not keep any one in durance there without having a jailer in his employ.

He knew, too, that the janitors of many large buildings are tools in the hands of designing men, and before long he was prying into the reputation of several who served in that capacity in that quarter.

All at once he bethought himself of a certain person well-known in the neighborhood as "Captain Cerberus."

"He's mean enough to do anything!" exclaimed Kit. "The little old fellow has the strength of a lion and the cunning of a fox, and I will have to meet him with a good deal of tact if I get any information out of him. If he is connected with Owlet, of course he won't tell me. I've got to find that out for myself."

Captain Cerberus had his quarters carefully inspected by the boy sharp before an advance was made.

He inhabited a large building which extended far enough back of the sidewalk to admit of a view of the broken chimney from one of its rear windows. Such was Kit's supposition, at any rate.

What, then, was the boy's satisfaction when, on entering a cheap restaurant in the near vicinity, to discover the dwarfish figure of Captain Cerberus at one of the back tables.

The sharp-eyed pygmy was discussing a well-cooked rib with the accompanying relish of a bottle of cheap wine.

"That's the old fellow!" thought Kit, eying the janitor attentively. "The bird is away and the nest is empty so far as he is concerned. He has just started in on his dinner and the chances are that he will take his time to it. Munch away, captain. I know enough about you to peep into your establishment if I can get there. The clew of the tall chimney, and the fact that you live in its vicinity nearly settles a certain suspicion in my mind. Were I Prince Owlet and had a boy to hide, I don't know but that I would come to Captain Cerberus."

Kit left the dwarfish janitor to the enjoyment of his meal and went away.

In a few seconds he had entered the suspected building with a good deal of boldness.

This was an easy matter, as the door was not locked, and the structure was one whose back rooms had no intercourse with those in front.

Kit traversed the hall, found a stairway and ascended.

There was something thrilling about being in the same building that might contain Paul Fassett. It was dangerous ground, and Kit fully realized the step he had taken.

If Captain Cerberus should return unexpectedly and find him in the house, his career as a Pavement Sharp might come to a sudden ending, and the facts were that the janitor was liable to return at any time.

Kit soon reached the third floor of the house, the one Paul was on, if he was there at all.

Up to this time he had met with no one.

Suddenly the boy shadow stopped in a long corridor which was full of shadows, and listened.

He thought he had heard a peculiar tapping which, while it seemed to come from a distant point, might be in the building.

Not willing to disturb the maker of the noise, whoever he might be, Kit took off his shoes and advanced again.

Presently he heard the sounds with more distinctness than before, but all at once they ceased, and dead silence reigned.

But by this time Kit had made a discovery.

"I'm getting close to somebody," thought the boy, "and, if I mistake not, the person I'm onto is in the room just ahead."

He went on to the door and applied his ear to the keyhole.

At first he heard nothing, but in a minute he caught the sound of a quick step, and then he knew that some one had reached the portal.

Despite his attempted calmness, the heart of the boy sharp was in his throat. Was he really near Paul Fassett? Did but a door separate them?

For several seconds Kit kept his ear at the keyhole, then he thought he heard a long-drawn sigh of disappointment and a receding footstep.

The room beyond the door was surely inhabited!

"It is Paul—Paul Fassett!" mentally ex-

claimed Kit. "I have found the prisoner of the schemer; but I'm in a trap myself, in some respects as dangerous as the one which holds him."

Kit waited to hear no more, but with a careful look down the dark corridor he applied his knuckles to the door in a series of gentle knocks.

In an instant the footstep came back.

"Who are you?" came to the young ferret's ears in eager accents.

"First, who are you?" replied Kit.

"I am Paul Fassett! Did the letter fall into your hands?"

"Yes," answered the boy on the outside.

"Thank Heaven! I prayed that it might fall into the hands of a friend. I took out a pane of glass and threw it as far as I could. Who are you?"

"A boy like yourself."

"Good! Where are they?"

"Captain Cerberus is tickling his appetite on the street—"

"And Prince Owlet and his friend?"

"I don't know where they are."

A short silence followed Kit's reply.

"There is one other question," said the prisoner.

"Ask it."

"Perhaps you can guess it before I get that far."

"Is it about Floy?"

"Yes! yes!" in eager tones.

"Floy is safe in the city."

"Then, get me out of here!"

Kit would have assured Paul that such was his intention if a sound that drove him erect had not fallen upon his ear.

"Some one is coming," he whispered to the prisoner.

"My God!" was the response. "Get away from the door, for if you are found here you are lost!"

Kit was gone before the last words had left Paul's tongue, and a few feet from the door, where the shadows lay thick, he hugged a corner and held his breath, with his heart once more in his throat, but ready for anything that should present itself.

His sharp ears had not deceived him, for in a short time he saw a figure come down the corridor, and the next moment Captain Cerberus appeared bearing a tray containing Paul Fassett's dinner.

Kit watched the jailer-janitor with breathless interest.

He saw him unlock the door and push his burden forward.

"Dinner!" called out Captain Cerberus, and, as a footstep came toward him, Kit heard the tray deposited on the floor or upon a table and the dwarfish form reappear.

Captain Cerberus had held no communication with his captive, and Kit was glad when he saw him re-lock the door and turn his back upon him as he started down the aisle without investigating the corner which held him.

"Good-by, Captain Cerberus!" ejaculated Kit. "I trust we won't meet again until I'm out of this dangerous nest with the boy you have cooped up here. Keep your distance, I'll keep mine!"

CHAPTER X:V.

HEADS OR TAILS.

As the reader may suppose, Mother Magnus and Jubal Joff were anxious to find out whether Oliver Owlet had been hurt by his fall from the window, but the celerity with which he scampered from the vicinity after his drop told them that he had not been seriously injured.

After the adventure Jubal undertook to play spy and it was not long before he could tell his mistress that the Prince of Gotham was in a good condition to hatch more plots against the documents which had nearly cost him his life.

This was true, as we happen to know.

While Kit was in the house presided over by Captain Cerberus, Oliver Owlet was calling on the old man with whose name we opened our story—Philip Penrod, the Wizard Cobbler.

The old shoemaker was surprised to have a call from the oily fellow to whom he had sold certain papers obtained from Mother Magnus.

He thought Oliver had called for the remainder of the documents, which, owing to events well known to the reader, he was not able to furnish.

But Prince Owlet had another object in view.

He thought himself able to gain possession of the prize in the end; but just now he wanted to score a point against Kit, the boy sharp.

He pretended to know nothing about Kit, and with the oily tongue of the adroit rascal he was, he said to Philip Penrod:

"I've got a job for a shrewd boy if you could recommend one."

The old man opened his eyes, but made no reply.

"You are doing what you can for me," the scoundrel went on. "I appreciate everything you do, but if I had a boy, on whom I could rely, I'd put him upon another thing which, with your assistance, would soon prove a golden bonanza."

"Good boys are scarce," said Philip, his tongue loosened at last.

"Right you are," was the reply. "I want an agile boy, one who would take your advice and on whom you could rely on all occasions."

"I might find such a boy," answered the cobbler, a curious twinkle in the depths of his little eyes.

"You think you can, eh?" inquired Owlet.

Old Penrod bowed.

"By Jove! I'd like to know just where to lay hands on him!" exclaimed the Prince.

"When?"

"Now."

"I might find him within two hours."

"So soon?" cried the rascal, affecting surprise.

"I could try."

Owlet promised to "keep shop" for the cobbler that length of time, while he (Philip) looked for the boy he was willing to recommend.

Within the next five minutes the shoemaker was on the street.

He knew where Kit was often found when he was not at the shop, and it was in hopes of finding him that, in his greed for money, he had left the greatest scamp in New York in sole charge of the den.

But no sooner had Old Penrod left the shop than he was followed by Leon, whom Owlet had left on guard on the outside.

The scheme of the two men was to find out where Kit might be found, and Owlet had played his part of the game with a good deal of cunning.

Leon, who was no novice in the art of following people, kept track of Philip Penrod, and trailed him to a place where he was sure Kit spent some of his time.

He saw the shoemaker come out of the house with a disappointed look, but he did not follow him on the back track.

In a little while Leon learned by adroit queries that a boy had quarters in the house entered by the cobbler, and that he seldom failed to visit it once or twice every twenty-four hours. He was sure he had excited no suspicion by his questions, and having obtained what information he wanted, he went away to communicate with his master.

Penrod reported to Owlet that he had failed to find the boy he wanted, and the Prince replied that he was very much disappointed.

Then away went the master-spirit of the plot, and Leon, over a bottle of wine, recounted his adventures and their success.

"We've got the boy dead to rights now," exclaimed Owlet. "Old Philip has given us a clew that puts victory into our hands, and all we have to do is to lie in wait for the youngster, who will sooner or later come back to the nest, where he can be nabbed and finished. Let's toss for it."

"For what?" asked Leon, with a look of surprise.

"To see who does the work," was the answer.

"Some one has to go and ambush the gutter lynx of Gotham."

Prince Owlet, as he finished, drew a coin from his pocket and tossed it toward the ceiling of their quarters, to which they had returned for consultation.

"Name it," he said to Leon.

"Heads!" was the reply, and the coin struck the floor almost before the words were spoken.

With much eagerness Owlet bent over the shining piece of silver, and then glanced up at his friend with a smile.

"Tails! I win!" he exclaimed, and then he pocketed the coin with a serious, almost stern cast of countenance.

"I guess I'm able to take care of him. If I am not, then let the game go by default."

Leon seemed pleased because the coin had fallen tails up. It relieved him of a very disagreeable job—one which he did not relish in any form.

"He's liable to drop in at any time," continued Owlet, and the sooner we corral him the better."

"I think so," was the response. "He is likely to return to the room before coming back to old Philip's."

"I hope so."

The following moment Owlet was beyond the door, and not long afterward he found himself ensconced behind a long piece of dark cloth which hung before one of the corners of Kit's room, thus forming a simple wardrobe for his few wants in the clothing line.

The Prince of Gotham was a man of patience. The ambush was hot and very uncomfortable, but he did not complain.

He wanted to pay Kit for warning Mother Magnus of the intended burglary, and, then, he wanted also to get rid of the boy.

With the keen Kit out of the way, Mother Magnus could not be prepared so surely for a raid of the kind they (the conspirators) might want to make in the near future.

Owlet saw the afternoon creep away with his hopes flagging considerably. Still he did not despair.

He had resolved within himself to wait until midnight when if Kit did not come he would rejoin Leon and they would hatch out another plot.

The sun, dropping between the Jersey hills, cast the great city in shadow, and Owlet from his uncomfortable retreat saw the gas-lights once more in the street below.

"What! am I going to fail?" exclaimed the rascal. "This isn't getting on very fast, but if he would come now I would feel that I had not watched in vain."

Just then a certain sound fell upon Owlet's ears, the best one he had heard since taking up his station behind the cloth.

The succeeding moment he heard the low hum of voices, and then the door almost directly before him was opened and two persons entered.

The room was quite dark by this time, and even the sharp eyes of the boss rascal in New York could not see who were before him, but a voice which he heard thrilled his inmost soul.

"Here's where I live sometimes," said a voice. "Very few people know it, though. That's what makes the place so safe."

"I'm glad it is safe," was the answer, and this was the voice that startled Owlet. "Won't Captain Cerberus be mad when he discovers that his bird has flown?"

"Ay, won't he?" and the words were followed by a laugh. "I expected a hot meeting with the old watch-dog before we got out of the house, but fortune favored us, and here we are in good trim to meet the fellows who are trying to pick out all the trumps in the deck."

Owlet could hardly content himself behind the curtain.

In a short time he saw a match flash up, and a cautious peep showed him not only Kit the boy sharp, but Paul Fassett whose voice he had already recognized.

"Now keep quiet here until I come back," continued Kit, addressing Paul. "I won't be gone long and when I put in an appearance I hope it will be as the bearer of good news."

"Then you can't go too quickly," exclaimed Paul.

Owlet saw the Pavement Sharp quit the room and in another second he was alone with the Jersey boy whose back was turned toward him.

"By Jupiter! this is luck!" mentally exclaimed the Prince of Gotham. "I never drew a luckier card. The boy out there must not be here when Kit Keen comes back. If he is, we are ruined!"

And the cunning scamp drew the curtain to one side, and glided toward Paul, his hands clinched and his eyes seemingly on fire.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE HAWKS' TALONS.

The Jersey boy, waiting for Kit's return, did not suspect the presence in the room of his worst enemy, Oliver Owlet.

If he had dreamed that the Prince of Gotham was coming down upon him with the stealthiness of a tiger, he would not have remained motionless very long.

The light was so arranged that it did not throw the villain's shadow in advance and Paul seemed completely at his mercy.

Owlet continued to approach with his eyes fastened on his victim and when but a few inches separated them he paused and raised his hand.

It seemed that at the last moment fortune had declared in favor of Paul, for all at once, as though mysteriously warned, the menaced boy turned his head.

The next moment Paul was on his feet with a startling cry and Oliver Owlet was staring at him with a half-frightened face and a ludicrous expression.

The tableau thus formed did not last long. It was suddenly broken by the Prince of

Gotham who sprung at Paul, and before the boy could throw up his hands or otherwise defend himself he was in the scoundrel's clutches.

Owlet's rage, as shown by his face, knew no bounds.

His fingers seemed to meet in Paul's flesh, and his eyes glared at him without a spark of mercy. "So you got away, eh?" exclaimed Owlet. "It takes a pretty strong cage to hold you, I see!"

"A pretty strong cage," echoed Paul.

"We'll see that the next one is escape-proof," replied the villain. "You had help, though. The gutter rat who was here awhile ago, helped you out."

Paul did not answer.

"You can't get away from us!" continued Owlet. "If you had not been so stubborn when we wanted to deal fairly with you, you might be free to-day and in good shape, too. There's a chance yet."

"I won't take it!" exclaimed Paul, drawing back the full length of Owlet's arm.

"Stubborn yet, eh?" laughed the man.

"If you call that stubbornness, yes!"

"See here, I'm powerful enough to crush you here!" was the retort.

"Perhaps you had better!"

"Do you defy me? By Jove! boy, when you tempt Owlet of New York, you court a fate worse than death."

Paul looked up into his captor's face, but did not speak.

Perhaps Owlet thought he was losing time dallying with his young prisoner there when Kit was liable to return at any moment.

At any rate, he thought it time to quit the place.

"Come!" he said to Paul. "We are going away."

The boy held back, but in a second he was jerked forward with a force which more than ever convinced him of the strength of the man into whose power he had fallen.

"In heaven's name, what will Kit think when he returns?" rushed through Paul's mind as he was dragged toward the door. "My absence will nearly drive him wild. He might fetch Floy with him! God help me if I am taken to another prison by Oliver Owlet, the fortune-hunter of Gotham!"

By this time Paul had almost reached the door. The grip of the rascal had gained new strength. It was vise-like and unyielding.

"Not a word or sign on the street!" whispered Owlet. "You ought to know that safety depends on your silence. I shall watch you like a hawk and the first sign or signal to any one will cost you the life you ought to value highly."

Paul felt his heart sink within him while he was being conducted down the steps leading to the street. He was hoping against hope that Kit would appear suddenly in their path and change matters, but he was doomed to disappointment, for they reached the foot of the stair without accident.

Oliver Owlet seemed to recollect his thoughts during the brief moment for which he halted with his boy prisoner in the doorway.

All at once he started forward, and in a second Paul was on the street again, but under guard, and in the greatest peril he had yet experienced.

The lights were burning brilliantly on the thoroughfare. They danced strangely before the boy's eyes, and it made him sick to think that among the many people who jostled him he was a prisoner, and that an appeal for help might cost him his life.

Owlet was anxious to get his captive away before something should occur to baffle his scheme.

He did not know how soon Paul would disregard his plans and take the risks by shouting for help.

Was he going to take Paul back to the place presided over by Captain Cerberus, whose vigilance had been defeated by the Pavement Sharp?

Paul had strange thoughts while he was conducted from one street to another.

More than once Owlet came suddenly upon a policeman, whose uniform for a second would inspire Paul with hope, but the villain had a happy faculty of dodging the blue-coats, and Paul's heart would sink again.

"We are surely going back to Captain Cerberus!" mentally exclaimed Paul at length. "The old fellow won't give me a very cordial welcome. He has doubtless discovered my flight ere this, and I shall find him in bad humor."

But the Jersey boy was mistaken.

Instead of conducting him to the neighborhood of the tall white chimney, Owlet turned into a short and quiet street and abruptly led

Paul up a flight of steps and into a small but well-furnished room.

Paul guessed at once that it was one of Owlet's haunts.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the fellow, pushing Paul into an arm-chair, while he stepped back with an air of triumph. "This is better than the gutter-rat's hole. What do you think of it?"

The boy looked around, but made no reply.

"It is my den," resumed Owlet. "I don't employ anybody to keep an eye on people who come here. I do that myself, for I know how it ought to be done."

"You ought to know," said Paul. "I dare say you've had a good deal of experience in that line."

The scoundrel smiled grimly at this thrust.

"How about the papers by this time?" he asked.

"You ought to know as much as I do," answered Paul.

"Maybe I do!" laughed Owlet, and then he leaned forward and suddenly seized his captive's arm.

"Listen," said he. "Those papers are where I can lay my hands on them when I want them. They will never fall back into your hands, and you might as well make up your mind to this, first as last. The gutter-rat found you once; but he can't do it again. You are not in his nest now; but you are safe in Owlet's clutches, with a better guard than Captain Cerberus was."

"I know I am in your power, but you will not be permitted to win the game!" responded Paul.

"Will not? Ha! ha!" laughed the rascal. "I wish you knew me, boy. The fortune mentioned in the documents will drop into my lap like a ripe plum. I am ready to reach up and shake the limb. And when I am in full possession, those who are looking for you will give up their quest, for further search will be useless."

"You are a merciless villain!" cried Paul.

"Thanks!" said Owlet, with a mock bow. "You seem to value the papers more than you do your life. You haven't offered them for your release."

"No!" exclaimed Paul. "I am fighting for my rights, and they are as dear as life itself."

"But you don't expect to win in the end?"

"We will see!" was the reply.

"You can't win as against us!" persisted Owlet. "We know the boy, Kit, and all his haunts. We can track him whenever we want him. He has found and lost you—lost you for the last time, I think."

"My sister, Floy—"

"She won't give us any trouble!" interrupted Owlet. "We can brush her aside with ease. Don't think that the girl can effect anything. She is powerless."

Paul gave the cool fellow another look, and turned away.

As he did so, the door opened, and he saw Leon Layne, Owlet's fellow conspirator, standing in the room.

"So you've found him, eh?" exclaimed Leon, with a glance from Paul to Prince Oliver. "By George! my heart has been in my throat ever since I found the nest empty. The captain is nearly beside himself."

"I thought so!" laughed Owlet. "But the bird is here after trying his wings for a spell, and he's safe enough, too!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SHADOW OF THE POLICE.

KIT had good news for Floy when he left Paul in his own lodgings.

He did not expect to be gone long, for, in his opinion, the game for a fortune was drawing to a close, and he was anxious to see Prince Owlet and his partner completely baffled.

Kit proceeded straight to Floy's abode, and had the good luck to find the young lady at home.

Floy's joy was without bounds when she learned that Paul had not only been found, but that he was safe at the young detective's lodgings at that very moment.

Nothing would do but that Floy must see Paul at once.

She wanted to assure herself that he was really safe—that he had escaped from the clutches of Oliver Owlet.

Proud of his victory, Kit offered to escort her to his lodgings, and in a short time the young couple were on the way thither.

"Here we are!" whispered Kit with a smile to Floy, as he laid his hand on the door of the room in which he had left Paul. "Your coming will be a surprise to him."

Then the Pavement Sharp opened the door and stepped forward, closely followed by the girl.

The next moment Kit recoiled with a cry of astonishment, and Floy grew pale, for both had seen at the same instant that the room was empty!

"It is impossible!" was Kit's first exclamation. "He was not to quit the room; but he is not here."

Floy said nothing.

"Something has happened," continued the boy.

"You have been watched."

"It must be so," admitted Kit. "Oliver Owlet has stolen a march on me!"

"What! has Paul fallen back into the hands of that man?"

Floy's hand clutched Kit's arm, and the face into which he looked was white with fear.

The girl in her fear had expressed the terrible truth which had forced itself upon the boy shadow.

"We must try again," said he, resolutely. "I don't intend to give up the struggle after this setback. I'm better mettle than that, I hope."

Floy went sadly back to her lodgings and Kit returned to his own.

He could not think that he and Paul had been tracked from the house presided over by the watchful Captain Cerberus.

He and Floy's brother had escaped with a good deal of secrecy, and in a manner which could not have placed the captain on their trail.

Of course he knew nothing of Owlet's visit to Old Penrod, nor of Leon's following of the old man to his (Kit's) lodgings—a sly game which, as the reader knows, enabled Owlet to win the victory he had just scored.

But Kit Keen was not the person to remain idle very long, with such a prospect ahead.

He had resolved from the first to fight the game through, without calling to his assistance any members of the police force.

He knew many of the detectives of New York. Some would laugh at his story, and others would give him no credit for what he had done.

"No!" said Kit, firmly. "I'll win by myself, or lose the battle! I don't want any reinforcements. If you can beat me, Oliver Owlet, all right. This is a fight to the very close!"

As Owlet had left no perceptible trail behind in capturing Paul at Kit's lodgings, it seemed impossible for the boy sharp to find a clew.

"They won't be likely to take Paul back to Captain Cerberus," mused Kit. "He got away from there once, and Owlet will distrust the captain from now on. The Prince of Gotham has several haunts of his own. One or two of them would hold Paul pretty fast. Let me see. I'll look after the nearest one first."

As Mother Magnus's establishment lay on his road to the place he had concluded to visit, he gave the old house more than a casual look as he neared it.

"I wonder if the Amazon is looking for me?" he thought. "She had me caged for awhile, but, thanks to a few pieces of tough cloth, I'm not there now."

The front of the house looked closed, but Kit knew that the dishonest friends of the woman knew how to enter without knocking, and at all hours of the night.

He did not hesitate to approach the place, and in a little while he was within a few feet of the door.

All at once Kit stopped, as if a tiger had sprung into his path.

The door which he thought tightly closed had opened, as if by magic, and, before he could run away, a hand had descended upon his shoulder, and closed there, like the jaws of a pair of pincers!

"I don't intend to crush you!" said a voice, which the boy sharp recognized. "I only want to see you for a few moments. Come in! We'll be alone."

Whether he wanted to enter the house or not, Kit knew that the speaker had strength enough to overpower him, and, quietly submitting, he was escorted across the step and through a dimly lighted room to an apartment where in the light he beheld the immense figure of his captor.

Mother Magnus's eyes had a satisfied twinkle. She was in a happy mood.

"You gave me the slip right nicely," she smiled, addressing Kit. "I might have known that you'd get out if you could; but I didn't expect it so soon. We're not going to quarrel about that, boy. I want to thank you."

"For what?" asked Kit, half bewildered.

"What! don't you know?"

"I can't think just now."

"For the warning!" exclaimed Mother Magnus.

Kit started.

"Come! you see I know something about it," resumed the "fence." "It came in good time and was of great service, too. I'm much obliged to you, boy."

Kit, who saw that concealment was no longer necessary, did not hesitate to say:

"I thought I ought to warn you against the plot by Oliver Owlet. He didn't get the documents, then?"

"He certainly did not. He got pushed through the window for his pains, and the pity is that he got off without a broken neck."

"What are you going to do now?" queried Kit.

Mother Magnus gave him a curious look.

"With the papers, do you mean?" she ventured.

"Yes."

"Well, Prince Owlet sha'n't have them! He hasn't money enough to buy them after his attempt to fleece me; and they say he has lots of dust, too."

"But he wants more," said Kit. "And he doesn't want to get it honestly, either."

"Of course not."

"He wants to cheat two young people out of their fortune."

"Two of them?" cried Mother Magnus, leaning forward.

"Yes; Paul and Floy Fassett."

"Where is the boy?"

Mother Magnus was becoming more interested than ever.

"He is in Owlet's hands; but the rascal can't win the game without the documents."

"Tell me all you know Kit Keen."

Kit was anxious to go back to the trail he had left a short time before; but he thought he saw a change in the Amazon's demeanor, and he resolved to see what there was in it.

Thereupon he told the woman all he knew about Paul and Floy; how the boy had been lured to New York by Oliver Owlet and his companion; how he had met with an accident and lost his valise and the important papers at the depot; how Floy had come to search for him, and finally, he related his own search for the lost boy from Jersey.

Mother Magnus listened to Kit's story without once interrupting him.

It was clear that, despite her profession, she sympathized with Paul; but she did not like the thought of losing the papers which had fallen into her hands through Jubal Joff's quickness and rascality at the depot.

"I don't want Oliver Owlet to win a point now!" exclaimed she. "He tried to rob me. He would have killed me if Jubal had not come to my rescue in the nick of time; but—"

Mother Magnus checked herself.

"But you don't like to lose the papers?" said Kit.

"Of course I don't," was the reply. "I know what they're worth. Everything is fish that comes to my net. You know that, Kit."

"Yes."

"The boy—Paul, you call him—has nothing to give for the documents."

"Not now, at least. With the estate in his hands, he could reward the proper persons."

"Do you think he would?" cried the woman.

"I do; but I don't make any bargains for him, Mother Magnus. You know that the documents belong to Paul and Floy; they know where they are. If the police—"

The woman's quick start broke Kit's sentence.

"If the police," he continued coolly, "knew what we know, there might be a sensation."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Mother Magnus, bounding from her chair. "I don't want to hear of the cops of Gotham! Don't mention them in my presence!"

Kit could not help smiling at the woman's fears.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGE ALLIANCE.

"I DON'T intend to call the police into the game if I can get along without them," said the boy sharp when he spoke again. "I tell you plainly, Mother Magnus, I am enlisted for the war, and I intend to help Paul Fassett and Floy all I can. Some villainous work has been done."

"Oliver Owlet is willing to do anything," replied the Amazon.

"He isn't the only one," rejoined Kit quickly.

"No, there is his dudish companion."

"Leon Layne?"

"Yes."

"He hasn't the cunning of his master, the Prince of Gotham. But he is no better than he. Both of them ought to be at Sing Sing, and, if I'm not mistaken, they're on the road to that place now."

"I won't shed any tears, Kit," grinned Mother Magnus.

"But you wouldn't like to be a witness, eh?"

The woman recoiled again. "Heavens, no! anything but that!" she gasped. "Whatever you do, keep me out of the courts, boy. You know why."

Kit smiled, but made no reply.

He knew that Mother Magnus did not want to go into court with her reputation as a notorious receiver of stolen goods; and, as she had exposed her fears, he took prompt advantage of the situation and said:

"I'm not going to drag you thither—that is, not if I can help it; I think you ought to help me a little. You can do it without fear, and, at the same time, pay Prince Owlet back for his treatment of you."

"I would like to smite him a blow!"

"I thought so!" exclaimed Kit. "I would if I were you. If I had been attacked by such a rascal, I'd take the first opportunity that offered itself to pay him back."

"How can I serve you?" asked Mother Magnus eagerly.

"By not selling the papers until we make you an offer for them."

"I'll do that!" cried the woman. "I'll keep 'em safe until you make me a proposition."

"That will do," answered the boy. "Owlet hasn't given them up. The scoundrel is only plotting new mischief in that direction. One back-set doesn't throw him out of the game. The second one may, if you play fair with me, Mother Magnus."

The woman was about to reply when there appeared in the doorway the dark face and agile figure of Jubal Joff.

Kit saw the man's eyes get an evil flash the moment they singled him out.

"He doesn't like me," thought the young shadow. "Even now his fingers are eager to meet in my throat, and he would like to shake me up for giving him and Mother Magnus the slip."

The next minute Jubal, with a quick glance toward his mistress, came forward.

"So you've got him cornered, eh?" he said. "I didn't expect to see the bird back in the old cage; but, now that he's here, we'll see that his wings are clipped, and—"

"Never mind his wings, Jubal," interrupted Mother Magnus. "We've just been talking about an alliance."

Mr. Joff's eyes seemed to start from his head.

"A—a alliance? With that boy?" he cried, covering Kit with his finger. "Well, that floors me!"

Mother Magnus, whose face had grown quite serious after her last words, broke into a smile again.

"Certainly, Jubal. Mr. Kit and I have about come to an understanding. You know what I owe him."

"Yes: he wrote the letter that gave Owlet's scheme away. I saw him do it in the house in the alley."

Kit bowed his confirmation.

"He owns up to it, you see," continued Jubal, with a grin. "But he's almighty slick, I tell you. I'd want to know just what's what before I went into partnership with him."

Jubal drew off and contented himself with measuring Kit with his searching eyes. He was suspicious, and, in short, he did not like the champion of the brother and sister's cause one bit.

"Were you waiting for a valise to be knocked from some one's hands when the accident occurred at the depot?" suddenly asked Kit, facing Jubal.

The man started as if a bomb had fallen at his feet. In half a second he changed color twice.

"Who says I snatched a valise?" he exclaimed, making a mad move toward the cool young detective.

"I say so," was the prompt response, and Kit met the angry eyes with commendable coolness. "Paul Fassett, the owner of the valise, says the same. He's a boy with a good memory, and he says he can recognize the man who took possession of his luggage."

Jubal Joff knew what that meant.

Theft is theft, and he had taken enough to place him behind iron bars for a long time.

"But if you've formed an alliance with Mother Magnus, I might subscribe to it and help you

some," adroitly responded Jubal, when he had recovered his breath.

Kit was amused.

"I refer you to Mother Magnus," said he. "If she keeps her word with me, we won't fall out over what has happened. I'm off now." And the boy, moving toward the door, thought best to keep his eye on Jubal Joff whom he knew to be a wary rascal, who might show the tiger in his nature by a sudden spring, despite all that had just passed.

The Pavement Sharp breathed freer when he found himself again on the street and under the lights of New York.

He had scored an important point in Paul's favor, and the next thing was to find the boy himself, and bring Oliver Owlet and his confederate to justice.

The reader will recollect that Kit was in search of Paul when he was caught and pulled into the Amazon's house by the Amazon herself.

He had lost some time; but he did not regret the interruption, as it had enabled him to exact from Mother Magnus a promise which he knew would be kept.

Not long after Kit's departure from the fence's den, he almost ran against a figure which he recognized at a glance.

It was Leon—Leon, the dudish looking right-bower of Oliver Owlet.

It was by the merest chance, the boy thought, that he was not seen at the same time; but he had evidently escaped by dodging, an art which he knew very well.

Leon didn't appear to have anything very pressing on his hands just then; but a few seconds later he quickened his gait and Kit looking forward saw the very person he expected to see—the Prince of Gotham.

The presence of the two conspirators together told him that they had disposed of Paul in some manner, and to discover them cheek-by-jowl, was to become their shadow again.

"By Jove! I must go back," suddenly exclaimed Owlet in Kit's hearing, the boy having played shadow well enough to get close upon the pair. "I'm afraid the door's unlocked."

"Is it so important?" queried Leon.

"It is. Go to the old rendezvous on the square and wait for me. I won't be gone long."

"Be careful! We've taken a good trick tonight, and to lose it now means to lose all."

"We don't propose to lose it!" exclaimed Owlet as he turned away, and, in his haste, he almost stumbled against Kit who would not have fared very well if the eyes of the prince had caught sight of him.

"Now's my time!" exclaimed Kit, starting after Owlet. "The chances are that he is going back to Paul. I must not lose sight of him now. Everything depends on keeping an eye on that human hawk."

Owlet's very gait, which, at times, was almost a run, told Kit that his mission was an important one. He plunged from one street into another, and at the end of twenty minutes of the most exciting chase the boy sharp had ever experienced, he saw Owlet disappear in a hallway which he knew led to one of his several haunts.

"I thought he intended to run me to the river!" exclaimed Kit. "Owlet has good legs, and he knows how to use them, too."

By this time Kit had reached the hallway. It was dark beyond the door. He thought a moment, and then entered.

A few feet beyond the step he found a stair.

"Shall I go up? Yes!" he said to himself; but the next moment, when he was ten feet from the floor, he stopped.

Somebody was coming down!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

THE stairway was quite dark, but Kit, the boy sharp, was in an unpleasant fix.

His first thought was to bound down the steps and, if possible, effect his escape; but the following moment he saw that this was out of the question.

The person coming down-stairs was so close that flight would only betray him, and the boy concluded to do the only thing that seemed feasible.

In a second he was hugging the dark wall and trusting to luck.

He had trusted to luck several times before in his career, and at no one time had it entirely deserted him.

In less time than we can record the fact, the man on the steps reached Kit's perilous position.

The boy detective held his breath and remained as motionless as a pillar.

Fortunately for him, the man kept between him and the opposite wall, although the space was cramped. Kit thought he felt the enemy's sleeve!

In a few moments it was all over.

The young Vidocq felt like he had been squeezed into the wall itself, and not until the man had passed down and out into the street did he venture to move an inch.

"That's what I call a close shave," muttered Kit, when he caught his breath after the ordeal. "I don't want another like it, though I'm willing to risk a good deal for Paul and Floy. This is better, however, than being caught by Oliver Owlet; a good deal better, ha, ha!" And he looked wistfully up the dark stair, debating in his mind what to do next.

Kit was reasonably sure that Paul was somewhere in the house.

He had rescued the young heir from the clutches of Captain Cerberus. Why could he not take him from the Prince of Gotham?

Within five minutes after the man's departure—Kit was sure that person was Owlet—he was on the second floor of the building.

"I found Paul before in a larger house than this," thought he. "Why not here?"

He found himself in strange quarters.

There were several doors in sight as he could see by the dim light that prevailed, but which one kept Paul a prisoner he did not know.

He listened first at one and then at another.

At length he decided in his own mind that beyond a certain knob was Paul.

The door was locked.

Kit put his lips to the keyhole and called in cautious tones the name of his friend. There was no response. If Paul heard him, he was not able to respond.

"Hello! what do you want?" exclaimed a gruff voice behind Kit, and the next moment he had sprung back from the door, and was gazing with dilated eyes at the speaker who had just emerged from a room opposite the one at whose door he had been.

This person was a dark-faced man with enormous whiskers, and a pair of eyes which Kit did not admire. He came forward as he spoke and the boy detective instinctively fell back, not knowing what sort of man he had encountered.

"We don't want young thieves here," continued the stranger, in the same voice.

"I'm no thief!" cried Kit. "You miss your mark, sir, when you call me that."

"But you were tinkering with my neighbor's lock."

"Your neighbor, eh?" exclaimed Kit.

"My neighbor's!"

"Who is he?"

"That's none of my business. He comes and goes the same as I do. We don't ask each other any questions."

"But you know him?" the boy persisted.

"I say I don't, and I don't care to," was the retort. "He's honest for aught I know—"

Kit broke the sentence with a derisive laugh.

"You don't believe it, I see," said the man.

"I don't, because I happen to know something about your neighbor," cried the boy.

"Well, keep your secret, for I don't want it."

"But I want to go into that room," continued Kit, pointing at the door.

"Without his consent?"

"Yes, without Oliver Owlet's consent. He keeps a prisoner in there. He holds Paul Fassett in his clutches, and there is no telling what has happened since he brought the boy here."

The man with the big beard and strange eyes seemed suddenly interested, for he took another step toward Kit.

"Do you say there's a boy locked up in that room?" cried he.

"I'm almost sure of it!"

"Well, I never did like my neighbor's cut, though he is a good-looking fellow. He reminds me of a serpent with pretty scales and charming eyes—"

"That's just what he is!" exclaimed Kit.

By this time the man was at the door, and the next moment the young detective saw him listening at the keyhole.

"If he can't unlock the door, he's strong enough to break it down," thought the boy sharp. "I've enlisted a giant in my cause, if I'm not mistaken."

"I don't hear anything," said the man rising and glancing at Kit.

"He may be helpless."

"Ah! that is true."

The big man disappeared suddenly in his own room, but a moment later he came to the front again with a key in his hand.

"I think my neighbor put a new lock on his door the other day," he went on. "If he has, I'll have to take other measures."

Kit waited with impatience for the result of the trying of the key.

"It won't work," the man said, stepping back. "If you are sure your friend is in there, we'll get to him some other way."

"I'm sure of it!" exclaimed Kit.

All at once the big man seized the knob with his enormous hands. He had a grip of iron and the power of a Hercules.

Kit watched him with breathless interest.

"Who else inhabits this house?" he asked.

"I don't know. My neighbor here and I seem to be the only lodgers; but there may be others. So he is Oliver Owlet, eh?"

"Yes. They sometimes call him the Prince of Gotham."

The man took his hands from the knob.

"You don't say so?" he cried, looking closely at Kit.

"He is no one else."

"Then, by Jove! I'll help you to anything you want as against that man!" was the response. "Prince of Gotham, eh? You don't have to know who I am, boy, and I don't care to hear your name. But I'm your friend in this matter. I want to get even with my sleek-looking neighbor."

He caught the knob again, this time with more power than before, and the next instant Kit heard something snap.

By a terrible twist, the big unknown had broken the knob off, for he held it up to Kit with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"Broken!" exclaimed the boy.

"Yes, the lock is broken, but the way is clear!" was the rejoinder, and the next second, to Kit's surprise, the hand of the giant pushed open the door and revealed the interior of a dark room.

Without ceremony Kit sprung across the threshold, but in a moment he stopped and waited on the match he heard snap behind him.

"Here he is! Paul! Paul!" cried the boy detective, and the big man saw him at an armchair in which reclined a human figure, the arms strapped to the arms of the chair and the head thrown back and fastened in the same manner.

The match when held over the chair by Kit's ally, revealed a startling picture. Paul was immovable in the torture seat. His face, the little of it that could be seen, was white and ghostly. A piece of strong leather was strapped over his mouth, and the eyes, turned toward the ceiling, had a wild and horrible stare.

"The boy is dead!" cried the man.

"Dead?" echoed Kit. "No! no! Paul can't be dead!"

In a moment the cruel strap had been cut loose, and the arms were freed.

The big man placed one hand on Paul's wrist while he looked into his face steadily for half a minute.

"There's a spark o' life left," he said, turning at last upon Kit.

"Thank Heaven! We'll fan it into a flame big and hot enough to scorch Oliver Owlet and his companion!"

"I hope so, boy! I'll do my share toward it; but if we had held back another minute, Paul, as you call him, would have been beyond help," and the Jersey boy was lifted from the chair and carried from the room by the speaker.

CHAPTER XIX.

KIT'S ROUND-UP.

HAVING found lost Paul Fassett for the second time, Kit was resolved that he should not get away again.

Prince Owlet was liable to return.

"If the rascal comes back here and finds the room empty," said Kit to the big man, "I may not get to play the decisive card against him."

"That is true," was the answer. "I am a match for Owlet, and, besides, as I have told you, I'm anxious to pay him back for a mean trick. I can watch for him here."

The boy sharp thanked his new friend for his kindness.

Paul, who had been brought "back to life," as it were, was able to be moved. Indeed, he was eager to get away from his last prison in which Oliver Owlet had undoubtedly left him to die in the chair, and not long after his opportune release, he and Kit were bowling over the streets toward Floy's abode.

We will not attempt to describe the joyous meeting of brother and sister, nor tell how the overjoyed girl held Paul's hands a long time in hers while she gazed into his face.

"Keep him here!" suddenly said Kit, catch-

ing Floy's arm. "I'm going out to see if I can find the game."

"But if the game should find you, Kit—"

"I'll risk that!" broke in the boy shadow, and before either Paul or Floy could reply he was gone and the door had shut behind him.

Oliver Owlet and his companion Leon were having a merry time in total ignorance of what had happened.

The Prince of Gotham had rejoined his friend to tell him that he had left Paul "secure," and, over a bottle of wine with which they were washing down an expensive supper, they were laying a new plot against Mother Magnus and the fortune papers.

Kit seemed to know where to find the game.

Crossing that portion of the city which lay between Floy's lodgings and the conspirators, he ventured to peep into a certain restaurant, where he found Oliver and Leon in the middle of their feast.

He backed out with a gleam of triumph in his eye.

"They're there, eh?" said a voice at his elbow.

"I've been watching them this half-hour."

Kit recognized Jubal Joff, Mother Magnus's spy.

"They're plotting mischief," continued Jubal, with a shake of the head. "I know when people do that by their movements. I don't want to have to face Owlet any more. He is as strong as a lion. What are you going to do?"

"I intend to turn the tables on the pair."

"When?"

"Now!"

"Not by yourself!" cried Jubal, drawing back and looking in amazement at the young detective.

"Not quite, Jubal," smiled Kit. "Would you oblige me by going down to the corner and asking the cop there to step this way?"

"Me?" gasped the spy. "Great Caesar! me ask a policeman anything! Jubal Joff is not a fool yet, boy! Go yourself; the game will be watched just the same."

Kit could not repress a smile. Jubal had committed too many petty crimes to seek the acquaintance of a policeman.

"Watch the birds, then," said Kit, moving off. "If the man on the corner is the person I hope to find there, two sparrows will be brought down with one stone."

Jubal resumed his station before the open door of the restaurant, and continued to eye Owlet and Leon a few seconds longer.

Ever and anon he threw hurried glances down the street as if in search of Kit and the officer.

Suddenly Mother Magnus's spy drew back.

The two hawks on the inside were coming out.

"I don't want 'em to see me on guard," said Jubal to himself, and then stepping still further aside, he saw the plotters come out and walk away.

"Where are they?"

Jubal fell back as if a bomb had exploded at his ear.

"They're gone!" he exclaimed, looking down at Kit, who was not alone, and then, seeing the burly figure of the policeman he had brought to his aid, he gave an audible gasp of fear, and disappeared in a manner most ludicrous.

"He's a pretty watch-dog!" smiled the policeman. "I think I knew that face. Your friends are not at their table, you say? We did not meet them. They have gone up-town, and are likely to outwit you."

"They shall not!" cried Kit. "You can't quit your beat to go far; I know that. I'll find the birds before they go back to the empty nest. I must!"

Away went Kit, watched for a moment by the officer, who, from his look, had an opinion of his own.

Almost suddenly, three squares away, he ran afoul of two men who were bargaining with a cabinan.

Owlet and Leon!

Near by stood a policeman who looked big enough to cope with both men at once.

"It is my old friend, Captain McDuff!" exclaimed Kit. "He's forgotten me, probably; but we can soon resume the acquaintance."

Owlet had advanced to the cab and put out his hand to open the door.

"Now or never!" thought the boy sharp.

In another instant an agile movement carried Kit to a spot where he was seen by both men at once.

"You don't go to Sing Sing by hack!" rung out the voice of the Pavement Sharp, attracting the policeman's attention by his startling sentence.

Oliver Owlet uttered a mad curse and started toward the boy.

"You like to cross arms with boys," said Kit. "But you'll never get to serve me as you've served Paul Fassett, the Jersey boy!"

Owlet stopped and looked at Leon, who was uneasy.

It was not unknown to the police of New York that a young girl named Floy Fassett had come to Gotham in search of her brother, who, she said, had been lured from home by a set of rascals; and Captain McDuff had a recollection of having heard Floy's story from her own lips.

Kit's mention of Paul seemed to send the big policeman forward.

The boy saw the movement and took lightning advantage of his opportunity.

"I've got proof enough to send both of you up the river!" he went on, fearlessly confronting the two men.

"Paul himself is ready to tell his story, and—"

"Don't foul your hands with the gutter-rat!" broke in Leon, anxious to get away.

"Ay, don't try to slope, Mr. Leon. You're as deep in the mud as Prince Oliver is in the mire! Paul can send both of you up!"

By this time there fell upon Prince Owlet's ears the heavy tread of Captain McDuff, and the next moment the hand of the officer closed on his arm.

"For what?" cried Owlet, drawing back, and glaring at the big cop.

"We'll see after awhile! You're no seraph, Prince Owlet!"

The rage of the rascal knew no bounds when he found himself in the policeman's grip.

He would have rushed upon the triumphant Kit if the big hand had not held him like a vise of steel.

As for Leon, he ran off as fast as a pair of nimble legs could carry him.

"He won't be hard to pick up," remarked McDuff with a smile, for the officer was not blockhead enough to desert a bird in the hand for one in the bush.

Oliver Owlet was really astonished when he found himself confronted by his young prisoner, Paul, whose story fastened the grip of the law upon him beyond all hope of escape.

In due time, as Captain McDuff had prophesied, Leon was run down, and the two worthies were remanded for trial.

Not long after these events Kit took Paul to Mother Magnus, who, partly through a wholesome dread of the law, and partly from sympathy, was induced to surrender the precious documents, which established the brother and sister's claim to a snug fortune.

In consideration of several things, Jubal Joff and Mother Magnus were permitted to escape, to be caught afterward for something else; but Owlet and Leon went "up the river," where they still curse the failure of the greatest scheme they ever plotted.

Old Penrod, the Wizard Cobbler, still pegs away, and does something else besides cobbling whenever he can, but Kit comes back no more.

As to Kit, he has left his old profession of shadowing, and he and Paul have opened up a paying business, thanks to the fortune which was once in jeopardy.

And it is said, not on the basis of a mere idle rumor, reader, that before long Miss Floy Fassett, pretty enough to be any one's sweetheart, will become Mrs. Kit Keen—the bride of Paul's friend and rescuer.

We extend our congratulations in advance.

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